**The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra**

**Chapter 26: Dharani**

With Commentary by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

*D*harani is a Sanskrit word that means "uniting and upholding." A dharani is just a mantra. Mantras are for the purpose of giving rise to goodness and destroying evil. A dharani "unites all dharmas and upholds limitless meanings."

A dharani unites in purity the three karmas of the body, mouth, and mind. It upholds the self-mastery of the six sense organs--eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind--in their wonderful functioning.

You can also say that "unite" refers to the mind, and "uphold" refers to the body. A dharani unites the mind so it can obtain the Dharma Flower Samadhi, and it upholds the body so it can obtain the Dharma Flower Dharani, the dharani of a Single Revolution.

It unites the three karmas of body, mouth, and mind. The body does not commit acts of killing, stealing, or sexual misconduct. The mind does not indulge in greed, hatred, or stupidity. The mouth does not utter any frivolous speech, lies, harsh speech or duplicity. If you can purify your three karmas--physical, verbal and mental--then the gates of your six senses will also be pure. When the gates of your six senses are pure, you can obtain the comfort of the interpenetration of the six senses.

A dharani is a mantra. Mantras are used for protection. They protect you so that all affairs turn out lucky and just as you wish. Today a laywoman told us that her son had been in an automobile accident. The car was totally destroyed, but her son was not hurt. Think of it. Cars are very hard, but his car was destroyed. People are very soft, yet he did not get hurt. What is going on here? This is just the power of dharani. His mother always bows the Medicine Master Repentance at home. This is the vow-power of Medicine King Bodhisattva who said that if you bow the Medicine Master Repentance, you can avert the nine kinds of untimely deaths--all kinds of fatal accidents.

Three years ago, Mildred Fong, the mother of Miss San Francisco (Cynthia Fong), took a trip to the country. On the way back it started raining. A truck came up behind their car and tried to make them go faster, then rear-ended them, sending their car flying two hundred yards through the air across the highway. Although Mildred Fong was inside the car, at that moment she felt herself going up into space. From the air she could look down and see another "self" in the car. "What is this?" she thought. "Oh, I am probably dead!" But in the blink of an eye she was back in the car with just a few bruises. You could say this was a response from the Mantra, because she recites the Great Compassion Mantra and she really believes in the Buddha. If it were not for the power of the dharani, how could she have had a response like that? It was due to the workings of the "auspicious, wish-fulfilling power of the protective dharani."

In this chapter of the Dharma Flower Sutra the Bodhisattvas and Vaishravana and others speak mantras that can be used in protecting the Dharma Masters who accept, uphold, read, recite, write out and explain the Dharma Flower Sutra, so no harm can come to them.
**Sutra:**
 **At that time Medicine King Bodhisattva rose from his seat, uncovered his right shoulder, placed his palms together, faced the Buddha, and said, “World Honored One, if a good man or a good woman can receive and uphold the Dharma Flower Sutra, whether reading or reciting it with ease and understanding, or writing it out, what blessings will that person gain?”**
Outline:

C3. Mantras for protection.
D1. Asking about the merit and virtue of upholding the Sutra.

**Commentary:**

**At that time,** when the “Universal Door Chapter” had been spoken and the “Dharani Chapter” was beginning, **Medicine King Bodhisattva** wanted to ask about the Dharma, so he **rose from his seat, uncovered his right shoulder,** a gesture of respect with the body; **placed his palms together,** a gesture of respect with the mind; **faced the Buddha, and said** respectfully with his mouth, **"World Honored One, if a good man or a good woman can receive and uphold the Dharma Flower Sutra, whether reading or reciting it with ease and understanding, or writing it out.”** He reads or recites it quickly and does not make any mistakes. He does not miss a line or a word. He has mastered the entire Sutra, in other words.

**What blessings will that person gain?** Those of you studying Sutras can translate them into English so that people can read them. There is limitless merit and virtue in this kind of work. But you cannot be sloppy about it. You cannot make mistakes or paste over things; that does not count. You must be very, very respectful. Sit in full lotus, extremely reverently, and write out each letter with the utmost care. You do not judge a person's handwriting by how pretty it is, but by how much strength it has, how much concentration power went into it. The person's inner strength flows into the paper. When Wang Xizhi, the best known Chinese calligrapher of the Jin Dynasty, wrote characters, the ink would penetrate three-tenths of an inch into the wood underneath the paper. That was because of the strength of his handwriting. Or, perhaps, the wood was very porous.

One person can write out the Sutras and gain great merit, while another can write them out and not gain any merit at all. Why? Because the first person writes them out very respectfully, whereas the other does it sloppily. Two people can do the same thing, and one will do a good job while the other makes a mess of it.

**Sutra:**
 **The Buddha said to Medicine King, “What do you think? If a good man or a good woman were to make offerings to Buddhas equal in number to the grains of sand in eight million kotis of nayutas of Ganges Rivers, would the blessings he gained not be great?”

“Very great, World Honored One.”

The Buddha said, “If a good man or a good woman can receive and uphold even a single four-line verse of this Sutra, read it, recite it, explain its meaning, and cultivate in accord with its teaching, his or her merit and virtue will be extremely great.”**
Outline:

D2. The answer: extremely great.

**Commentary:**

**The Buddha said to Medicine King, “What do you think? If a good man or a good woman were to make offerings to Buddhas equal in number to the grains of sand in eight million kotis of nayutas of Ganges Rivers, would the blessings he gained not be great?”

“Very great, World Honored One,”** answers Medicine King Bodhisattva. **The Buddha said, “If a good man or a good woman can receive and uphold even a single four-line verse of this Sutra, read it, recite it, explain its meaning, and cultivate in accord with its teaching, his or her merit and virtue will be extremely great,** greater than that of the person who made offerings to Buddhas equal in number to eight million kotis of nayutas of Ganges Rivers.”

**Sutra:**

**At that time Medicine King Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, I shall now give to the speakers of Dharma a dharani mantra for their protection.”**
Outline:

D3. Request for mantra of protection.
E1. Medicine King.
F1. The request.

**Commentary:**

**At that time Medicine King Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, I shall now give to the speakers of Dharma**—the Dharma Masters who receive, uphold, read, recite, write out and explain the Dharma Flower Sutra--**a dharani mantra for their protection.”**

This is the second time in America the Medicine Master Repentance has been bowed. This repentance is based on the Sutra of the Past Vows of Medicine Master Buddha. There are many different repentances. There is the Pure Land Repentance, the Great Compassion Repentance, and the Jeweled Repentance of the Emperor Liang, and the Compassionate Samadhi Water Repentance. In Hong Kong there is a Bhikshuni named Kuanhui who was a protector of Venerable Master Hsu Yun. Wherever the Venerable Master Hsu Yun was building temples, she would gather a lot of money in Hong Kong for him. She could also speak very well, even though she could not read. The laypeople all believed what she said.

She had a karmic obstacle, however. At one time she had been a cook, and she had killed a lot of crabs. One time a crab pinched her finger, and she chopped off the crab's claw, killing the crab in the process. Strangely enough, her finger then looked just like a crab, complete with head and claws, and it was extremely painful. She was practically dying from the pain. At Feng Mountain, she bowed the Samadhi Water Repentance. After that, it was gone, but a big sore remained on her hand that would not heal. At that time I went to the Zhilian Temple to speak the Earth Store Sutra. She was not jealous of me then because she did not consider me a rival yet—she knew I would not compete with her and she asked me, "How can I heal my hand? It always hurts." I said, "Repent, and it will get better."

"But I already bowed this and that repentance," she said, "a lot of them, but I cannot get rid of this 'crab' sore!"

I said, "It wants to leave you now. Give it the Three Refuges and you will be okay." She signed it up for taking refuge, and it took refuge with me. I gave it the Dharma name "Supreme Conch." After that it was gone, and it did not hurt.

Her hand did not hurt, but once she was better she got jealous. After Hsu Yun completed the stillness and I received his sharira, she said they were false. She said that to everyone, because she was afraid people would believe in me and she would take a loss. She was jealous. Even so, she had some affinities with the Buddha. She also had some ghostly affinities. What do I mean by this? If she had not had affinities with the Buddha, she could not have met up with Venerable Master Hsu Yun and have been one of his great Dharma protectors. She was the manager of Zhilian Temple.

She also had affinities with ghosts. When she was working in the kitchen, she once beat a cat to death. The cat had a ghost, and the ghost kept trying to take her life. It would give her a headache, a leg-ache, or this and that, making her sick all the time. She would say, "Brother cat, why do you want me to die? If you kill me, we will never get the books straight. Why don't you help me win at the race-track and then when I have some money I will take you across so that you can be reborn. Wouldn't that be better?"

When she said that, the cat listened to her instructions. She went to Macau and won the daily double. That was how she got rich. Then she opened a vegetarian restaurant. So she had affinities both with the Buddha and with ghosts. The ghosts helped her get rich. Later she left home and did pretty well. She could not see through things, however, and she was pretty uncomfortable when she died.

**Sutra:**
 **He then spoke the mantra, saying:**

**“An er. Man er. Mo mi. Mo mo mi. Zhi li. Zhi li di. She li. She li duo wei. Shan di. Mu di. Mu duo li. Suo li. E wei suo li. Sang li suo li. Cha yi. E cha yi. E chi ni. Shan di. She li. Tuo la ni. E lu qie pe suo. Bo zhe pi cha ni. Mi pi ti. E bian duo luo mi li ti. E tan duo bo li shu di. E jiu li. Mu jiu li. E luo li. Bo luo li. Suo jia cha. E san mo san li. Fo tuo pi ji li zhi di. Da mo bo li cha di. Seng qie nye jyu sha mi. Po she po she shu di. Man duo luo. Man duo luo cha ye duo. You lou duo. You lou duo qiao she liao. E cha luo. E cha ye duo ye. E po lu. E mo rao nuo duo ye.”**

Outline:

F2. Speaking the mantra.

**Commentary:**

Mantras are secret doctrines spoken by the Buddha. Usually, mantras are not explained, so we will just read them here. You can memorize them if you want to, and in the future we may explain them. But the wonderful functioning of the mantras cannot really be explained; one can only give the general idea.

**Sutra:**
 **“World Honored One, this dharani, this spiritual mantra has been spoken by Buddhas equal in number to the sands of sixty-two kotis of Ganges Rivers. If anyone harms this Dharma Master, he will thereby have harmed these Buddhas.”**
Outline:

F3. Praise.

**Commentary:**

**“World Honored One, this dharani, this spiritual mantra** I just recited, was spoken not just by me, but **has been spoken by Buddhas equal in number to the sands of sixty-two kotis of Ganges Rivers. If anyone harms this Dharma Master**--should a heavenly demon, an evil ghosts, or a devious spirits come to hurt the Dharma Master who receives, upholds, reads, recites, explains or writes out the Dharma Flower Sutra—**he will thereby have harmed these Buddhas.**

**Sutra:**
 **Then Shakyamuni Buddha praised Medicine King Bodhisattva saying, “Good indeed, good indeed, Medicine King, that you mercifully protect this Dharma Master by speaking this dharani, thereby greatly benefiting living beings.”**
Outline:

F4. Certification.

**Commentary:**

**Then Shakyamuni Buddha praised Medicine King Bodhisattva saying, “Good indeed, good indeed, Medicine King, that you mercifully protect this Dharma Master by speaking this dharani, thereby greatly benefiting living beings.”** By speaking this mantra, you bring copious benefit to living beings of the future.

**Sutra:**
 **At that time Courageous Giving Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, I too shall speak a dharani to protect those who read, recite, receive, and uphold the Dharma Flower Sutra. If this Dharma Master gains this dharani, no yaksha, rakshasa, putana, kritya, kumbhanda, or hungry ghost will be able to seek out his weakness and take advantage of him.”**
Outline:

E2. Bodhisattva Courageous Giving.
F1. Request.

**Commentary:**

So the Bodhisattvas are competing to give their mantras! **At that time Courageous Giving Bodhisattva** did not want Medicine King Bodhisattva to get all the merit, so he **said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, I too shall speak a dharani to protect those who read, recite, receive and uphold the Dharma Flower Sutra. If this Dharma Master gains this dharani** I am about to speak, **no yaksha,** speedy ghost; or **rakshasa,** essence-eating ghost will be able to harm him.”

Within people's hearts there are seven drops of water that are like sweet dew. If a ghost, such as the rakshasa eats one drop, you will have a headache for three days. These seven drops of sweet water are the very best of vitamins. If you possess them in full, you will not need to sleep. You will never feel tired no matter how hard you work. If a ghost eats three of your seven drops, you will become unconscious for about a week. If all seven drops get eaten, you will definitely die; there is no politeness about it. However, if you recite the Dharma Flower Sutra, the ghosts cannot get even a single drop. It will protect you from trouble with ghosts.

A **putana** is a “stinking hungry” ghost. They are very hungry, and they have a terrible stench. If a person even smells this stench, he will get sick. **Kritya** means "what is done." This is a kind of ghost that possesses dead bodies so the corpses can get up and walk around again. There are adherents to external ways who cultivate certain dharmas and get corpses to get up and walk around. They will walk as far as you tell them to. If someone dies far away from home and there is no way to send the body home, people may use this method to get the corpse to walk home! The corpse looks perfectly normal during the day, walking along the road. At night, they recite the mantra and it lies down again. During the day they get it to walk. This kind of feat is accomplished with the help of the kritya ghost.

Things depend upon people's attachments, too. For example, let's say you see a dark shadow at night and you think, "It is a ghost." Then when you get up closer, you see that it is a person. "Hah! It is a real person, not a false ghost!" you think. Actually, the person is also a false combination of the four elements and is not real either. But you are attached to it being real.

A **kumbhanda** is called "winter melon ghost" or "barrel-shaped ghost." It is also called “the nightmare ghost.” If you are sleeping at night, and the ghost sees that you are deep in sleep, snoring away, with total yin energy and no yang energy, it will jump on you! Then you will feel as if you are being smothered. You would not be able to move or get up. With your eyes wide open, you would not have any mantra to say, no dharani! If this goes on for too long, you can be smothered to death. If your yang energy rises again and light comes forth, the ghost will run off. The light returns because you have not completely been involved in evil deeds. You still have a bit of yang light to scare the ghost away. If you are as bad as the ghost, and are completely yin, it can smother you. Then you will join its ghostly retinue and go to work for the ghost, doing whatever it tells you to. If you do not do what it says, it will punish you. It may hit you, recite a spell to give you a headache, or paralyze you. In general, it will control you.

**Or hungry ghost.** The hungry ghost referred to here is the ordinary hungry ghost, not the stinking ones. With the aid of the dharani, these ghosts **will** not **be able to seek out his weakness and take advantage of him.** They will not have a chance to work their evil deeds and push this person around.

**Sutra:**
 **Then, in the presence of the Buddha, he spoke this mantra:**

**“Cuo li. Mo he cuo li. Yu zhi. Mu zhi. E li. E luo po di. Nie li di. Nie li duo po di. Yi zhi ni. Wei zhi ni. Zhi zhi ni. Nie li chi ni. Nie li chi po di.”**

**“World Honored One, this dharani, this spiritual mantra, has been spoken by Buddhas equal in number to the grains of sand in the Ganges River, all of whom rejoice in accord. If anyone harms this Dharma Master, he will thereby have harmed these Buddhas.”**
Outline:

F2. Speaking the mantra.
F3. Praise.

**Commentary:**

**World Honored One, this dharani, this spiritual mantra, has been spoken by Buddhas equal in number to the grains of sand in the Ganges River, all of whom rejoice in accord.** The Buddhas will rejoice in accord with those who recite this mantra. **If anyone**—a heavenly demon, an externalist or any other improper ghost or spirit—**harms this Dharma Master** who receives, upholds, reads, recites, writes out, or explains the Dharma Flower Sutra, **he will thereby have harmed these Buddhas.**

**Sutra:**
 **At that time the Heavenly King and World-Protector Vaishravana said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, I, too, out of compassion for living beings and in order to protect the Dharma Masters, shall speak this dharani.”**
Outline:

E3. Vaishravana
F1. Request.
 **Commentary:**

The Heavenly King Vaishravana, "Much Learning" who was from the north, had just seen Medicine King Bodhisattva and the Bodhisattva Courageous Giving speak their mantras. Then he thought, "I am one of the Four Heavenly Kings. I cannot fall behind the Bodhisattvas. I should speak a mantra, too."

**At that time the Heavenly King and World-Protector Vaishravana said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, I, too, out of compassion for living beings and in order to protect the Dharma Masters, shall speak this dharani** for the five kinds of Dharma Masters, those who receive and hold, read, recite, explain and write out the Dharma Flower Sutra.”

**Sutra:**
 **He then spoke this mantra:**

**“E li. Nuo li. Nou nuo li. E nuo lu. Nuo li. Ju nuo li.”**

**“World Honored One, by means of this spiritual mantra, I protect the Dharma Masters. I shall also personally protect the holders of this Sutra within an area of one hundred yojanas so that no harm or misfortune comes to them.”**
Outline:

F2. Speaking the mantra.
F3. Praise.

**Commentary:**

**“World Honored One, by means of this spiritual mantra, I protect the Dharma Masters. I shall also personally protect the holders of this Sutra** acting as their Dharma Protector, **within an area of one hundred yojanas so that no harm or misfortune comes to them,** so that nothing unlucky happens.”

**Sutra:**
 **At that time the Heavenly King “Holder of the Country” was present in the assembly and reverently surrounded by a host of a thousand myriads kotis of nayutas of gandharvas. He went before the Buddha, placed his palms together and spoke to the Buddha saying, “World Honored One, I too shall protect the upholders of the Dharma Flower Sutra with a dharani, a spiritual mantra.”**
Outline:

E4. The King Holder of the Country.
F1. Request.

**Commentary:**

**At that time the Heavenly King “Holder of the Country” was present in the assembly and reverently surrounded by a host of a thousand myriads kotis of nayutas of gandharvas**—music spirits. **He went before the Buddha, placed his palms together and spoke to the Buddha saying, “World Honored One, I too shall protect the upholders of the Dharma Flower Sutra with a dharani, a spiritual mantra.”**

**Sutra:**
 **He then spoke this mantra:**

**“E qie mi. Qie mi. Ju li. Qian tuo li. Zhan tuo li. Mo deng qi. Chang qiu li. Fu lou suo ni. E di.”**

**“World Honored One, this dharani, this spiritual mantra, has been spoken by forty-two kotis of Buddhas. If anyone harms this Dharma Master, he will thereby have harmed these Buddhas.”**
Outline:

F2. Speaking the mantra.
F3. Praise.

**Commentary:**

The king "Holder of the Country," having spoken his mantra, then said, **“World Honored One, this dharani, this spiritual mantra, has been spoken by forty-two kotis of Buddhas.”** The number “forty-two” represents the forty-two positions of great masters of the Dharma body: Ten Dwellings, Ten Practices, Ten Transferences, Ten Grounds, Equal Enlightenment, and Wonderful Enlightenment. **If anyone harms this Dharma Master, he will thereby have harmed these Buddhas.**

Sometimes people cannot read. How can they recite the Sutra, then? They can just recite the title, "Namo Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra." That is one way. They can also ask someone else to recite it on their behalf, or read it, or write it out. In China, if a Dharma Master lectures a Sutra, many people come to make offerings. I am not telling you this because I want offerings. Do not misunderstand me. But after this, if other Dharma Masters lecture on the Sutras, you should make offerings to them. I am doing pioneer work in this area. To say nothing of offerings, I am quite satisfied if people come to listen! You are supporting me by coming to the lectures. But once you know about the merit and virtue gained by listening to the Sutras and by asking people to lecture on the Sutras, then you will be fighting to be first to participate.

In China, some Dharma Masters can lecture on the Sutras, some cannot. There are some who even say, "Do not listen to Sutras. What use is that? Cultivation is just cultivation. What is there to understand?" Wouldn't you say that was just trying to put out everyone's eyes and make everyone blind? People like that cannot lecture, and they advise other people not to listen. This is the conduct of demons, big and small. You should take note of this. I am lecturing the Sutras here, but if other Dharma Masters lecture, you are definitely welcome to go listen to them lecture. I would never get jealous of another Dharma Master and tell you not to go. I would never do a thing like that. You can go wherever you want. Just make sure you listen to the Sutras. Sooner or later the day will come when you understand.

If you think you can just cultivate and not listen to the Sutras, you are cultivating blindly. You can cultivate for as many eons as there are sand grains in the Ganges, but you will never succeed. It is like cooking sand and hoping it will turn into rice. It will never, never happen. You just cannot turn sand into rice. If you do not study the teachings to gain a clear understanding of them, but you just plunge ahead and cultivate blindly, you might as well be cooking sand to make rice. You should take special note of this.

The Buddha praised people who lecture on the Sutras, who read, recite, receive and hold, and explain the Sutras for others and who write them out. Now if someone says, "Do not do it!" wouldn't you say that person is a demon? Such people are just afraid that you will understand, and so they tell you not to study. They do not want you to understand, because once you do, they would not be able to cheat you anymore!

I am not like that. I am delighted if someone understands more than I do; I am really pleased. I am certainly not afraid anyone will surpass me. Do not ever be jealous of people, thinking, "He is higher than me. I think I will get a knife and cut him down to size." That is a mistake! You should never slander a Dharma Master who upholds the Dharma Flower Sutra. If you do, you are just harming all those Buddhas--forty-two kotis of them.

**Sutra:**
 **At that time there were rakshasa women. The first was named Lamba, the second was named Vilamba, the third was named Crooked Teeth, the fourth was named Flower Teeth, the fifth was named Black Teeth, the sixth was named Much Hair, the seventh was named Insatiable, the eighth was named Holder of Beads, the ninth was named Kunti, and the tenth was named Robber of the Essence and Energy of All Beings. These ten rakshasa women, along with the ghost mother and her children and their retinues, all went before the Buddha and spoke to him in unison, saying, “World Honored One, we, too, wish to protect those who read, recite, receive, and hold the Dharma Flower Sutra, and keep them from harm. Should anyone seek out the weaknesses of these Dharma Masters, he will not be able to take advantage of them.”**
Outline:

E5. Rakshasa women.
F1. The names of those who request in unison.

**Commentary:**

**At that time there were rakshasa women.**Rakshasa women are ghosts who eat the essence and energy of living beings. They are very fierce. Anyone who bumps into one of these ghosts will die within a hundred days. They will eat your essence and energy day by day until you can do nothing else but die. You will burn down like a candle. Everyone is afraid of these ghosts. If you say, "I am not afraid of them!" then try it out. But I would not recommend it.

**The first was named Lamba.**Rakshasa ghosts are predominately female. They do not necessarily look that bad. In fact, they are quite pretty. When most people see them, they become infatuated with and attached to them. Then the ghost can eat their essence and energy. So watch out! Lamba means "into bondage."

**The second was named Vilamba,** which means "apart from bonds." **The third was named Crooked Teeth.** She had curved fangs like an elephant or a boar--very scary. **The fourth was named Flower Teeth.** Her teeth looked like flowers. **The fifth was named Black Teeth.** Her teeth were normal in shape, but they were as black as coal. **The sixth was named Much Hair.** She had hair growing all over her head, her face, everywhere. You could not see anything of her at all except for her eyes and her two nostrils. Pretty strange. **The seventh was named Insatiable.** She always wanted more of everything--one more bowl of food, one more bowl of food, and so on. Everyone else was done eating, but she was still sitting there thinking, "I am not full yet." The same applied to clothes. She had to wear three, four, five, six, seven pieces of clothing and she never felt she had enough. In general, she was never satisfied; she never knew when to quit. Do not become her disciple! Do not imitate her, or you will never amount to anything.

**The eighth was named Holder of Beads.** She always had beads in her hands, admiring them, holding on to them, never putting them down. **The ninth was named Kunti.** She was always wanting to be the emperor in the east or a king in the mountains. **And the tenth was named Robber of the Essence and Energy of All Beings.** Whether you give it to her or not, she is going to steal it. So how do you deal with her? Study the Dharma Flower Sutra. Read, recite, write out the Dharma Flower Sutra.

Rakshasas are quite terrible. They are most unreasonable, and they inflict great harm on people. But here, they have changed for the better. They have changed from the deviant to the proper and so they are about to speak a dharani to protect the Dharma Flower Sutra.

**These ten rakshasa women, along with the ghost mother and her children.** The ghost mother eats children! If a woman has a child, the ghost mother follows her around, waiting for a chance to eat the child. Perhaps the woman will get angry, get sick, eat or sleep too much, get in a peculiar mood, or drink some wine, or in general, break the rules. At that time the ghost mother can take advantage of the mother’s laxness and eat the child. Even before a child is born, she is already smacking her lips in anticipation, and as soon as it is born, she comes to devour it.

Seeing she had eaten a lot of children, the Buddha thought, "I should save the children of the world," and so he took the smallest of the ghost mother's children, number one thousand. She still had 999 left, but the ghost mother just happened to love her littlest child the best and thought of him as a treasure. She went everywhere looking for her treasure, but to no avail. "Where did it go?" she wondered. Then she listened very carefully, and she could hear her child crying. Where was the little baby ghost? He was stuck underneath the Buddha's bowl. She tried to seize the bowl but she could not budge it. She went back and got her other 999 children and all of them tried using their ghost penetrations to move the bowl. But still it would not budge.

So they went to the Buddha to negotiate. "Buddha, you are most compassionate. Then why have you put my little baby under your bowl? That is not being very compassionate, is it?" She talked very cleverly, like those people who tell you not to study the Sutras. Anyway, the Buddha said, "So I am not being compassionate? How about yourself?"

She said, "I do not need to be compassionate. I am a ghost mother. Why should I be compassionate?"

"If you are not going to be compassionate, the least you could do is refrain from killing and eating people."

"If I do not eat people, what am I going to eat?" she demanded. "What else is there? I only eat children. I do not like to eat grown-ups or old people because their flesh is smelly and rotten. It is children’s flesh that I like, because it is tasty and tender!"

The Buddha inquired, "How many have you eaten?"

"Oh, I could never give you a total. As many as the number of sand grains in the Ganges River, for sure," she replied.

"You have eaten so many human children. How do you think their mothers feel when you do that?" asked the Buddha.

"That is their problem," said the ghost mother.

The Buddha said, "You are wrong. Now, you are missing one child, and you cannot bear it. How do you expect human mothers to stand it when you eat so many of their children?"

"But if I do not eat children, I would not have anything to eat!"

"Yes you will," said the Buddha. "From now on, when my disciples eat, they will give you a share of their food. After this you must not eat any more children."

Since the ghost mother wanted her baby ghost back, she had to relent. "Okay, okay, give my child, and I will be a vegetarian." After that, she did not eat children anymore.

And so these ten rakshasa women came, along with the ghost mother and all of her thousand children **and their retinues,** the whole ghost gang. People have people retinues, ghosts have ghost retinues, and animals have animal retinues. **All went before the Buddha and spoke to him in unison saying, “World Honored One, we, too wish to protect those who read, recite, receive and hold the Dharma Flower Sutra, and keep them from harm** and all unlucky circumstances. **Should anyone**--such as a heavenly demon, an externalist, or a demon king--**seek out the weaknesses of these Dharma Masters, he will not be able to take advantage of them.** They will have no way to give the Dharma Masters trouble.”

**Sutra:**
 **Then, in the presence of the Buddha, they spoke this mantra:**

**“Yi ti li. Yi ti min. Yi ti li. E ti li. Yi ti li. Ni li. Ni li. Ni li. Ni li. Ni li. Lou xi. Lou xi. Lou xi. Lou xi. Duo xi. Duo xi. Duo xi. Dou xi. Nou xi.”**

**“Climb on top of our heads, but do not trouble this Dharma Master. No yaksha, rakshasa, hungry ghost, putana, kritya, vetala, ghanta, omaraka, apasmaraka, yakshakritya, human kritya; nor any fever lasting one day, or two days, or three days, or four days, or up to seven days; nor any constant fever; nor any shape of man, woman, young boy, or young girl shall trouble him, even in his dreams.”

Then, in the presence of the Buddha, they spoke this verse:**

**“If anyone fails to comply with this mantraOr tries to disturb one who speaks the Dharma,His head shall break into seven pieces,Like the branch of the arjaka tree.**

**Like the retribution for the offense of killing one’s parents,Or that of pressing oil,Or cheating others with weights and measures,Or Devadatta’s offense in breaking up the Shangha---One who harms this Dharma MasterShall incur calamities such as these.”**

Outline:

F2. Speaking the mantra.
F3. Praise
 **Commentary:**

**"Climb on top of our heads,** we do not care," said the rakshasa women. "You can defecate and urinate on our heads if you want to, **but do not trouble this Dharma Master** or cause him to become afflicted. **No yaksha,** speedy ghost; **rakshasa,** essence-eater; **hungry ghost; putana,** stinking hungry ghost—probably this kind of ghost farts a lot and so it is as smelly as can be; **kritya,** corpse-controlling ghost; **vetala,** red-colored ghost; **ghanta,** yellow ghost; **omaraka,** black ghost; **apasmaraka,** blue ghost—this ghost looks like a lawn or something so be careful when you walk on the grass; **yakshakritya,** yaksha corpse-controlling ghost; **human kritya,** human corpse-controlling ghost; **nor any** ghost-caused **fever lasting for one day, or two days, or three days, or four days, or up to seven days; nor any constant fever; nor any shape of man,** a ghost in the shape of a man, **woman, young boy or young girl shall trouble him, even in his dreams.**

When people are asleep, it is easy for ghosts to get at them; they are more vulnerable to the attack of ghosts. But ghosts are not allowed to trouble the Dharma Master who received and upholds the Dharma Flower Sutra, not even in dreams. **Then, in the presence of the Buddha, they spoke this verse: If anyone fails to comply with this mantra, or tries to disturb one who speaks the Dharma, his head shall break into seven pieces, like the branch of the arjaka tree.** When the leaves of this tree fall to the ground, they invariably break into seven parts.

**Like the retribution for the offense of killing one's parents, or that of pressing oil.** The oil presser grinds sesame seeds to make oil. Then bugs come along and eat the oil and get very fat. So what does the oil presser do? He presses the bugs in with the seeds to get as much oil in as he can. In this way he kills many, many living beings. **Or cheating others with weights and measures.** This is like a retailer who, for purchasing beans, has a scale that says ten pounds when the beans really weigh eleven pounds. Then he has another scale for selling that reverses the procedure: You put ten pounds on the scale, and it reads eleven.

**Or Devadatta's offense in breaking up the Sangha**. Devadatta, the Buddha's cousin, broke up the harmony of the Sangha. He shed the Buddha's blood. He also tried to persuade King Ajatashatru to kill his father. He committed all of the five rebellious acts, which deserve the retribution of falling into the unintermittent hell. **One who harms this Dharma Master shall incur calamities such as these!** One who offends the Dharma Master who upholds the Dharma Flower Sutra will reap a retribution just as severe as those received for the serious offenses mentioned above.

**Sutra:**
 **Having spoken this verse, the rakshasa women said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, we, too, shall personally protect those who receive, uphold, read, recite, and cultivate this Sutra, causing them to be peaceful and secure, free from all harm and illness, and able to neutralize all poisonous potions.”**
Outline:

F4. Their vow.

**Commentary:**

**Having spoken this verse, the rakshasa women said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, we, too, shall personally protect those who receive, uphold, read, recite, and cultivate this Sutra, causing them to be peaceful and secure, free from all harm and illness, and able to neutralize all poisonous potions.** If any poison enters the mouth of these Dharma Masters, it will turn into sweet dew.”

**Sutra:**
 **The Buddha told the rakshasa women, “Good indeed, good indeed! In protecting those who receive and uphold even the name of the Dharma Flower, your blessings will be unlimited; how much more so for protecting those who receive and uphold it in full; who make offerings to the Sutra text of flowers, incense, beads, powdered incense, paste incense, burning incense, banner, canopies, and music; and who light various lamps--butter lamps, oil lamps, lamps of fragrant oil, lamps of sumana oil, lamps of champaka flower oil, lamps of varshika flower oil, lamps of utpala flower oil, and lamps such as these, of a hundred thousand kinds. Kunti! You and your retinue should protect Dharma Masters such as these.”**
Outline:

F5. Certification.

**Commentary:**

**The Buddha told the rakshasa women, "Good indeed, good indeed!** It is good that you have turned from the deviant toward the proper. You are not being stupid anymore, you are not confusing people anymore, and you are not cheating people. That is great! **In protecting those who receive and uphold even the name of the Dharma Flower, your blessings will be unlimited; how much more so for protecting those who receive and uphold it in full; who make offerings to the Sutra text of flowers, incense, beads, powdered incense, paste incense, burning incense, banner, canopies, and music; and who light various lamps--butter lamps, oil lamps, lamps of fragrant oil, lamps of sumana**, yellow flower, **oil, lamps of champaka flower oil, lamps of varshika**, summer-blooming, **flower oil, lamps of utpala**, blue lotus, **flower oil, and lamps such as these, of a hundred thousand kinds. Kunti! You and your retinue should protect Dharma Masters such as these.”**

**Sutra:**
 **When this “Dharani Chapter” had been spoken, sixty-eight thousand people obtained the Patience with the Non-production of Dharmas.**Outline:

D4. Hearing the chapter and gaining benefit.

**Commentary:**

**When this “Dharani Chapter,”** Chapter Twenty-six, **had been spoken, sixty-eight thousand people obtained the Patience with the Non-production of Dharmas.**