**The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra**

**Chapter 28: The Encouragement of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva**

With Commentary by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

We have been lecturing on the Dharma Flower Sutra for over twenty-five months. If you managed to attend all the lectures during this time, the Dharma Flower Assembly Bodhisattvas are all very fond of you. If you missed some lectures, they would not frown on you, but they might be a little less fond of you. If you came to every lecture, then you have tied up affinities with the Dharma Flower Assembly Bodhisattvas—Medicine King Bodhisattva, Medicine Superior Bodhisattva, Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, and the others.  
  
This is the final chapter of the Dharma Flower Sutra, “The Encouragement of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva.” Universal Worthy of Great Practice is one of the four great Bodhisattvas, the other three being Guanyin Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, Manjushri Bodhisattva of Great Wisdom, and Earth Store Bodhisattva of Great Vows. They protect Shakyamuni Buddha's Dharma. At the very end of the Dharma Flower Sutra, Universal Worthy Bodhisattva steps forward to say a few words to everyone to encourage people to propagate the Dharma Flower Sutra and bring forth the Bodhi mind and to receive, uphold, read, recite, explain, and write out the Dharma Flower Sutra.   
  
Universal Worthy Bodhisattva is noted for his great practice, and he also made Ten Great Kings of Vows. With his position of such authority and responsibility, he now encourages living beings to bring forth the Bodhi resolve.  
  
The Dharma Flower Sutra has been lectured now for twenty-five months. It will soon draw to a close. The Chan Session begins on the 15th of November. It will last fourteen weeks. However, it will be divided into individual weeks of meditation, any number of which you may attend. If you want to attend all fourteen, that is the very best. After the Chan Session is over, I will begin lecturing the Avatamsaka (Flower Adornment) Sutra. I am thinking that since we have the tape recorder, I can lecture two hours during the daytime, and in the evening we can use two hours to translate the lectures for everyone.

Since many people work and cannot come to listen in the daytime, we can tape the lectures and you can come at night and hear the translation made from the tape. It will still be me lecturing, although you do not get to hear it in Chinese. This will save some time. If everyone likes to do it this way, we can finish the Sutra in half the time. If you do not want to do it this way, then where it would have taken five years, we might need ten years to finish. That would be alright, but it would also be possible to finish in five years.

Once the Avatamsaka Sutra has been lectured, you will all be great Dharma Masters! When you have heard the entire Avatamsaka Sutra, your wisdom and eloquence will be unobstructed. It is said, “If one does not study the Avatamsaka Sutra, one cannot know the Buddha’s true wealth.” It is all in the Avatamsaka Sutra, endless and infinite principles. Some of you missed quite a few of the Dharma Flower Sutra lectures. Do not miss any of the Avatamsaka Sutra lectures. Do not miss such a rare opportunity. If you lose this opportunity, you might not get another chance. Its doctrines are so vast in scope that they are not easy to come by. Once you missed them, it is hard to get them back.   
 **Sutra:**  
 **At that time Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, renowned for his comfort, spiritual powers, and awesome virtue, came from the east together with uncountable, boundless, incalculable great Bodhisattvas. The countries they passed through quaked, and jeweled lotuses rained down while uncountable hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of kinds of music played.**

Outline:  
  
B3. Personally exhorting to propagate.  
C1. Arrival.  
D1. Offerings.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**At that time,** when the Buddha was about to speak the final twenty-eighth chapter of the Sutra, **Universal Worthy Bodhisattva** made an appearance. “Universal” means "everywhere." “Worthy” refers to the fact that his position is very close to that of the Buddha. He is just a little ways away from Buddhahood, just as the moon on the fourteenth of the lunar month is a bit short of being full.   
  
Universal Worthy Bodhisattva is **renowned for his comfort, spiritual powers, and awesome virtue.** “Comfort” refers to the singularity of the principle. “Spiritual powers” refers to the singularity of practice, for without cultivation there can be no spiritual powers. “Awesome virtue” refers to the singularity of the person. “Renowned” refers to the singularity of the teaching.   
  
Universal Worthy Bodhisattva **came from the east, together with uncountable, boundless, incalculable great Bodhisattvas.** Universal Worthy Bodhisattva abides in the east. The Avatamsaka Sutra says that Universal Worthy Bodhisattva dwells in the truth, not in any country, so why are we talking about countries here? The “country” referred to is just the truth. You cannot think, “Hmmm, it says he lives in the truth, and here a country is mentioned. What is this?” They are the same, that’s all.  
  
**The countries they passed through** all **quaked.** This represents the purification of the sense faculties of all living beings. **And jeweled lotuses rained down.** This represents the production of good thoughts within your true mind. Many good thoughts are like many jeweled lotuses. **While uncountable hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of kinds of music played.**   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **He was also accompanied by and surrounded by a great host of countless gods, dragons, yakshas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras, mahoragas, humans, non-humans and so forth. Each was manifesting the power of awesome virtue and spiritual penetrations.**  
Outline:  
  
D2. Teachings.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**He was also accompanied by and surrounded by a great host of countless gods, dragons, yakshas** (speedy ghosts), and **gandharvas.**Gandharvas are musical spirits in the Jade Emperor's courts. They are also called "incense sniffers" because they gather around incense. When the Jade Emperor wants some music, he just lights some incense and the gandharvas all come by to play.   
  
**Asuras** are ugly beings who love to fight. **Garudas** are the great gold-winged peng birds, former dragon eaters, now turned vegetarian. There were also **kinnaras** (musical spirits), **mahoragas** (big snakes), **humans, non-humans** (hell beings, hungry ghosts and animals), **and so forth. Each** of them **was manifesting the power of awesome virtue and spiritual penetrations.** The members of the eightfold divisions also had awesome virtue and spiritual penetrations, although theirs were not as great as Universal Worthy's.   
  
**Sutra**:  
 **Arriving at Mount Gridhrakuta in the Saha world, they bowed in obeisance to Shakyamuni Buddha, circumambulated him seven times to the right.**  
Outline:  
  
D3. Paying their respects.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**Arriving at Mount Gridhrakuta in the Saha world.** This world is called “Saha,” which means "able to be endured," because it is filled with all types of sufferings and yet living beings endure them.   
  
**They bowed in obeisance to Shakyamuni Buddha,** and **circumambulated him seven times to the right.** “Seven times to the right” represents the Seven Bodhi Shares.   
  
**Sutra:**  
  
**And said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, in the country of the Buddha Superior King of Jeweled Awesome Virtue, I heard from afar that in the Saha world, the Dharma Flower Sutra was being spoken. I have come with uncountable, boundless hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of Bodhisattvas to hear and receive it. I only pray that the World Honored One will speak it. After the passing of the Thus Come One, how is a good man or good woman to obtain the Dharma Flower Sutra?”**  
Outline:  
  
C2. Encouragement.  
D1. Question about encouragement.  
E1. The question.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**And** Universal Worthy Bodhisattva **said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, in the country of the Buddha Superior King of Jeweled Awesome Virtue, I heard from afar that in the Saha world, the Dharma Flower Sutra was being spoken. I have come with uncountable, boundless hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of Bodhisattvas to hear and receive it. I only pray that the World Honored One will speak it. After the passing of the Thus Come One, how is a good man or good woman to obtain the Dharma Flower Sutra?”** The Buddha is now speaking the Dharma Flower Sutra. But after the Buddha enters Nirvana, how is one to go about receiving and upholding the Dharma Flower Sutra?   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **The Buddha told Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, “If a good man or a good woman accomplishes Four Dharmas, he will attain the Dharma Flower Sutra after the passing of the Thus Come One. First, he is the object of the Buddha’s mindfulness and protection. Second, he amasses the roots of virtue. Third, he enters the collection of proper concentrations. Fourth, he brings forth the mind to rescue all living beings.”   
  
“If a good man or a good woman in this way accomplishes these Four Dharmas, he is certain to gain this Sutra after the passing of the Thus Come One.”**  
Outline:  
  
E2. The answers.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**The Buddha told Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, "If a good man or good woman accomplishes Four Dharmas, he will attain the Dharma Flower Sutra after the passing of the Thus Come One. First, he is the object of the Buddha's mindfulness and protection.** One who cultivates all good dharmas will be protected by the Buddhas. **Second, he amasses the roots of virtue.** The Buddha's protection represents permanence, the first of the Four Virtues of Nirvana. The roots of virtue represent the second, bliss. **Third, he enters the collection of proper concentrations.** This represents the third virtue of Nirvana, true self. **Fourth, he brings forth the mind to rescue all living beings.** This represents the fourth virtue of Nirvana, purity.   
  
You can also say that the protection of the Buddhas represents the happy-dwelling conduct of the body. Amassing the roots of virtue is the happily-dwelling conduct of the mouth. Entering the collection of proper concentrations represents the happily-dwelling conduct of the mind. Bringing forth the mind to rescue all living beings is the happily-dwelling conduct of vows. And so those are the Four Happy-dwelling Conducts.   
  
Protection of all the Buddhas and entering the collection of proper concentrations represents putting on the Thus Come One's robe. Amassing the roots of virtue represents sitting on the Thus Come One's seat. Bringing forth the mind to rescue all living beings represents entering the Thus Come One's room.   
  
These four may also be explained according to opening, demonstrating, awakening to, and entering the Buddha's knowledge and vision. The Buddha's protection refers to opening the Buddha's knowledge and vision. Amassing the roots of virtue refers to demonstrating the Buddha's knowledge and vision. Entering the collection of proper concentration refers to awakening to the Buddha's knowledge and vision. Bringing forth the mind to rescue all living beings refers to entering the Buddha's knowledge and vision.   
  
The doctrines in Sutras may be explained in an infinite variety of ways.   
  
**If a good man or good woman in this way accomplishes these Four Dharmas, he is certain to gain this Sutra after the passing of the Thus Come One.** One will encounter the Dharma Flower Sutra and get to receive it, uphold it, read it, recite it, explain it to others, and write it out. Now that you have heard the sutra explained, certainly all four of these qualifications have been met.   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **Universal Worthy Bodhisattva then said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, in the last five hundred years, in the turbid, evil world, if there are those who receive and uphold this Sutra, I shall protect them, keep them from harm, and cause them to be peaceful and secure. No being will be able to take advantage of them, be it a demon, a demon son, a demon daughter, a demon subject, or one possessed by a demon, a yaksha, rakshasa, kumbhanda, pishacha, kritya, putana, vetala, or any tormentor of human beings--none shall get at them.”**  
Outline:  
  
D2. Vows for encouragement.  
E1. Vows to protect the people.  
F1. Keeping them from external difficulties.  
 **Commentary:**   
  
**Universal Worthy Bodhisattva then said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, in the last five hundred years, in the turbid, evil world."** There are three Dharma ages. The first is the Proper Dharma Age. During this period of time, people are strong in liberation. Many people gain liberation. This was the time the Buddha is in the world and the hundred years after he enters Nirvana. During the next five hundred years, people are strong in dhyana samadhi. During the third five hundred years, people are strong in building temples. This is the Dharma Image Age. During the fourth period of five hundred years, people are strong in learning. They learn a lot of Sutras, but they do not cultivate. They think understanding is enough, and so they do not practice. The fifth five hundred years is right now, when people are strong in fighting. We are, at present, in the Dharma Ending Age. During this age, everyone competes with everyone else. People fight with people; pigeons fight with pigeons. Why? Over food! Over little things! One has food, the other does not, so they fight. People are selfish and out for personal profits. “The turbid, evil world” refers to the five turbidities: the turbidity of the eon, the turbidity of views, the turbidity of living beings, the turbidity of afflictions, and the turbidity of the life span.   
  
**If there are those who receive and uphold this Sutra, I shall protect them.** I, Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, make a vow to protect them, to **keep them from harm** and any unlucky circumstances or disasters, **and** to **cause them to be peaceful and secure. No being will be able to take advantage of them.** No one can come looking for these people's weaknesses and then make trouble for them, **be it a demon; a demon son; a demon daughter; a demon subject,** a member of a gang of demons; **or one possessed by a demon.** If people are possessed by demons, they will speak in a crazy way and create demonic karma. These are ox-ghosts, snake-spirits, heavenly demons, deviant spirits, and externalist. They are all spoken of in the final section of the Shurangama Sutra, which explains the fifty demon states. When demons possess a person, they surround him with a demonic glow so that his mind is totally confused and senseless. He has to say what the demon wants him to say, and do what the demon wants him to do. There are many demons who have considerable spiritual powers.   
  
If there is **a yaksha** (speedy ghosts); **rakshasa** (fearful ghosts); **kumbhanda** (wintermelon ghosts); **pishacha** (essence eaters); **kritya** (corpse-controlling ghosts); **putana** (fever ghosts, also called a stinking hungry ghosts); **vetala** (a ghosts to whom followers of externalist ways appeal in order to harm people), **or any tormentor of human beings, none shall get at them.** They will have no way to make trouble for people who receive and uphold the Dharma Flower Sutra.   
 **Sutra:**  
 **“If there is a person reading or reciting this Sutra, whether walking or standing, I will at that time mount my royal white elephant with six tusks and together with a host of Great Bodhisattvas go to that place, manifest my body, make offerings, protect him, and comfort his mind, and also make offerings to the Dharma Flower Sutra.”**  
Outline:  
  
F2. Teaching with inner dharmas.  
G1. Reading and reciting whether standing or walking.  
  
**Commentary:**  
**If there is a person reading or reciting this Sutra, whether walking or standing,** or sitting, **I,** Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, **will at that time mount my royal white elephant with six tusks,** the “six tusks” represent the Six Perfections. The “white elephant” represents the Great Vehicle Dharma. **And together with a host of Great Bodhisattvas,** I will **go to that place, manifest my body, make offerings** to the Buddha, **protect him, and comfort his mind,** saying "Good man, bring forth the Bodhi resolve. It would not be long now before you sit in the way-place and realize the Way." **And** I will **also make offerings to the Dharma Flower Sutra.**   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **“Should a person be sitting and pondering over this Sutra, I will at that time again mount my royal white elephant and manifest before him. If he should forget a line or a verse of the Dharma Flower Sutra, I will teach it to him, and read and recite it with him until he becomes fluent. Upon seeing me, the one who receives, upholds, reads, and recites the Dharma Flower Sutra, will rejoice greatly and increase his vigor. Having seen me, he will immediately obtain samadhis and Dharanis: a Dharani by the name of Revolution, a Dharani of a hundred thousand myriad kotis of revolutions, and a Dharani of the skill-in-means of Dharma sounds. He shall obtain Dharanis such as these.”**  
Outline:  
  
G2. Sitting and pondering over the Sutra.  
 **Commentary:**   
  
**Should a person be sitting and pondering over this Sutra, I will at that time again mount my royal white elephant and manifest before him. If he should forget a line or a verse of the Dharma Flower Sutra, I will teach it to him, and read and recite it with him until he becomes fluent.** I may help him in silence, so that he receives a response and suddenly remembers what he forgot.   
  
**Upon seeing me, the one who receives, upholds, reads, and recites the Dharma Flower Sutra, will rejoice greatly and increase his vigor.** "I saw Universal Worthy Bodhisattva!" Because of **having seen me, he will immediately obtain samadhis and Dharanis: a Dharani by the name of Revolution, a Dharani of a hundred thousand myriad kotis of revolutions, and a Dharani of the skill-in-means of Dharma sounds. He shall obtain Dharanis**—dharmas of uniting and upholding—**such as these.”**   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **“World Honored One, if in the last five hundred years, in the turbid evil world, there is a Bhikshu, Bhikshuni, Upasaka, or Upasika who seeks, upholds, reads, recites, writes out, or wishes to cultivate the Dharma Flower Sutra, he or she should be single-minded and vigorous for twenty-one days. At the end of twenty-one days I will mount my white elephant with six tusks, and surrounded by uncountable Bodhisattvas, I will appear before that person in a body all living beings delight in seeing, and speak the Dharma for him, instructing, benefiting, and delighting him. I shall further give him a Dharani mantra. Once he obtains this Dharani mantra, no non-human will be able to hurt him, nor will he be confused by women. I will also personally protect this person forever. I only pray the World Honored One will allow me to speak this Dharani mantra.”  
  
Then, in the presence of the Buddha, he spoke this mantra, saying:**

**“E tan di. Tan tuo po di. Tan tuo po di. Tan tuo jiu she li. Tan tuo xiu tuo li. Xiu tuo li. Xiu tuo luo po di. Fo tuo bo shan mi. Sa pe tuo luo ni e po duo ni. Sa po po sa e po duo ni. Xiu e po duo ni. Seng qie po li cha ni.Seng qie nie qie tuo ni. E seng chi. Seng qie po qie di. Di li e duo seng qie duo liao. E luo di po luo di. Sa po seng qie di san mo di qie lan di. Sa pe da mo xiu bo li cha di. Sa pe sa tuo lou tuo qiao she liao e na qie di. Xin e pi ji li di di.”**

Outline:  
  
G3. Three weeks of vigor.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**World Honored One, if in the last five hundred years** of the Dharma Ending Age, that is, right now, **in the turbid evil world, there is a Bhikshu, Bhikshuni, Upasaka, or Upasika who seeks, upholds, reads, recites, writes out, or wishes to cultivate the Dharma Flower Sutra, he or she should be single-minded and vigorous for twenty-one days,** without retreating. Why twenty-one days? In seven days, people go through a small transformation in their nature, mind, and body. In two weeks, there is a middle-sized transformation. In three weeks, there is a major transformation. What kind of a transformation? Let's say you were "dark." In a week you can transform a small light, in two weeks a middle-sized light, and in three weeks a big light. If you can sincerely recite the Dharma Flower Sutra for three weeks, you can obtain a great response.   
  
There was once a Dharma Master who wrote out the Dharma Flower Sutra with his own blood. When he was done, he puts the brush in a pool to wash it, and in the pool many lotuses sprang up. The pond was frozen over and now all the ice formed into patterns that looked like lotuses. That is an inconceivable state.   
  
There was also a Dharma Master by the name of Langran, who recited the Dharma Flower Sutra. He recited and recited, transferring the merit to his mother. In the temple, an ox died, and that night the Dharma Master had a dream. Someone came to him and said, "I am your mother. I had deviant knowledge and deviant views and did not believe in the Triple Jewel. Consequently, I fell and became an ox. Since you have recited for me, I have received the benefits of the Dharma Flower Sutra, and my life as an ox has come to an end. I will be reborn in the neighbor's house. I am telling you about the advantages of the Dharma Flower Sutra."   
  
Many things like this have happened. Sick people who have recited the Sutra have gotten well.   
  
"But I cannot recite it," you say.   
  
You can learn how if you study it. The wonderful advantages of the Dharma Flower Sutra are inconceivable!   
  
Here we are talking about reciting the Dharma Flower Sutra for twenty-one days, but it does not have to be the Dharma Flower Sutra; it could be another Sutra, or a mantra. But that was why we have seven-day sessions instead of eight-day sessions. In seven days you break through the seventh consciousness to bring alive the eighth consciousness.   
  
**“At the end of twenty-one days I will mount my white elephant with six tusks, and surrounded by uncountable Bodhisattvas, I will appear before that person in a body all living beings delight in seeing.** This does not mean any particular body, but whatever kind of body pleases a given living being. **And** I will **speak the Dharma for him, instructing, benefitting, and delighting him. I shall further give him a Dharani mantra. Once he obtains this Dharani mantra, no non-human will be able to hurt him.”** No demons or other deviant spirits or ghosts will be able to destroy him. **Nor will he be confused by women.** Some men are very intelligent until they see a woman, and then they do all kinds of confused things. They do not know why they are turned by this state. If you ask them, they do not know. That is ignorant. “Confused” means that basically a person may have a bit of samadhi power, but then he sees a woman and he loses it altogether and becomes muddled. Once he gets away from the women, he is fine again. Strange! Such defiled thoughts flow without cease. They are defiled dharmas. However, if you receive and uphold the Dharma Flower Sutra, you would not be confused by improper women.   
  
**"I will also personally protect this person forever. I only pray the World Honored One will allow me to speak this Dharani mantra.** I do not dare do it on my own. In the presence of the Buddha, I must first obtain his permission before I can speak it." This shows Universal Worthy Bodhisattva was respectful of the Buddha. He insisted on getting approval before he spoke the mantra. The Buddha, of course, assented by being silent, and so **then, in the presence of the Buddha, he spoke this mantra, saying:**  
  
**E tan di. Tan tuo po di. Tan tuo po di. Tan tuo jiu she li. Tan tuo xiu tuo li. Xiu tuo li. Xiu tuo luo po di. Fo tuo bo shan mi. Sa pe tuo luo ni e po duo ni. Sa po po sa e po duo ni. Xiu e po duo ni. Seng qie po li cha ni.Seng qie nie qie tuo ni. E seng chi. Seng qie po qie di. Di li e duo seng qie duo liao. E luo di po luo di. Sa po seng qie di san mo di qie lan di. Sa pe da mo xiu bo li cha di. Sa pe sa tuo lou tuo qiao she liao e na qie di. Xin e pi ji li di di.”**

**Sutra:**  
 **“World Honored One, if there is a Bodhisattva who hears this Dharani, you should know that it is through the power of the spiritual penetrations of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva. If the Dharma Flower Sutra is circulating through Jambudvipa, and if a person receives and upholds it, he should bring forth this thought, ‘This is all through the power of the awesome spirit of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva.’”**  
Outline:  
  
F3. Protecting through the power of his spirit.  
  
**Commentary:**  
  
**“World Honored One, if there is a Bodhisattva who hears this Dharani, you should know that it is through the power of the spiritual penetrations of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva. If the Dharma Flower Sutra is circulating through Jambudvipa,** Jambudvipa is the continent on which we dwell. It is named after the Jambu-tree, and the “tree of superior gold,” whose leaves and fruit fall into the river and turn into fine, burnished gold. **And if a person receives and upholds it, he should bring forth this thought, ‘This is all through the power of the awesome spirit of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva.’”**   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **“If a person receives, upholds, reads, and recites it, properly recollects it, explains its doctrines, and cultivates according to its teachings, you should know that he is practicing the conduct of Universal Worthy. He has planted deep good roots in the presence of boundless, uncountable Buddhas. His head has been rubbed by the hands of the Thus Come Ones.”**  
Outline:  
  
F4. Showing the supreme cause.  
 **Commentary:**  
  
**If a person receives, upholds, reads, and recites it, properly recollects it, explains its doctrines, and cultivates according to its teachings, you should know that he is practicing the conduct of Universal Worthy.** Every single word of the Dharma Flower Sutra is inconceivably wonderful. One who understands this Sutra and cultivates according to it—opening, demonstrating, awakening to, and entering the knowledge and vision of the Buddhas—is cultivating Universal Worthy Bodhisattva’s door of practice of the Dharma Realm. **He has planted** infinite, **deep good roots in the presence of boundless, uncountable Buddhas. His head has been rubbed by the hands of the Thus Come Ones.**

**Sutra:**  
 **“If a person merely writes out the Sutra, at the end of his life, he will be born in the Trayastrimsha Heaven. At that time, eighty-four thousand heavenly women will welcome him with all kinds of music. He shall immediately don a cap made of seven treasures and enjoy himself among the goddesses. How much the more will this be the case for one who receives, upholds, reads, and recites it, properly recollects it, explains its doctrines, and cultivates according to its teachings! If a person receives, upholds, reads, recites, and explains its doctrines, at the end of his life, a thousand Buddhas will extend their hands towards him, so that he need not fear falling into the evil destinies. He will immediately be born in the Tushita Heaven in the presence of Maitreya Bodhisattva. Maitreya Bodhisattva has thirty-two marks, and is surrounded by a host of great Bodhisattvas and a retinue of hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of goddesses. Being born therein, he shall obtain merit and virtue and benefits such as these.”**  
Outline:  
  
F5. Showing the proximate result.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**If a person merely writes out the Sutra** and does nothing else, no reading or reciting or explaining, and so forth, **at the end of his life, he will be born in the Trayastrimsha Heaven,** the Heaven of the Thirty-three. **At that time, eighty-four thousand heavenly women will welcome him with all kinds of music,** playing flutes, guitars, pipes, and so forth, to welcome him. **He shall immediately don a cap made of seven treasures and enjoy himself among the goddesses,** perfectly happy! If one gains such benefits by merely writing out the Sutra, **how much the more will this be the case for one who receives, upholds, reads, and recites it, properly recollects it, explains its doctrines, and cultivates according to its teachings!**   
  
**If a person receives, upholds, reads, recites, and explains its doctrines, at the end of his life, a thousand Buddhas will extend their hands towards him,** rub him on the head, and give him a prediction, **so that he need not fear falling into the evil destinies**--the four evil destinies of asuras, hell-beings, hungry ghosts, and animals.   
  
**He will immediately be born in the Tushita Heaven.** Tushita means "contentment." The gods there are always satisfied and happy. They do not need food or clothes to make them happy, but they are never without either. The gods can eat by just thinking of food. The food comes, and they are full. This person will be born **in the presence of Maitreya Bodhisattva,** Invincible Bodhisattva. In the Tushita Heaven there is an inner court and an outer court. The ordinary gods dwell in the outer court. Maitreya Bodhisattva resides in the inner court. **Maitreya Bodhisattva has thirty-two marks. He is surrounded by a host of great Bodhisattvas, and** he has **a retinue of hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of goddesses. Being born therein, he shall obtain merit and virtue and benefits such as these.**  
  
**Sutra:**  
 **“Therefore, one with wisdom should single-mindedly write it out himself, employ others to write it out, receive, uphold, read, recite, and properly recollect it and cultivate in accord with its teachings.”**  
Outline:  
  
F6. Concluding encouragement.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**Therefore, one with wisdom should single-mindedly write it,** the Dharma Flower Sutra, **out himself, employ others to write it out** if he is unable to do it himself, **receive, uphold, read, recite, and properly recollect it, and cultivate in accord with its teachings.**  
  
**Sutra:**  
 **“World Honored One, I, now protect this Sutra with my spiritual powers. After the passing of the Thus Come One, I shall propagate it widely in Jambudvipa, so that it will never be cut off.”**  
Outline:  
  
E2. Vows to protect the Dharma.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
Universal Worthy Bodhisattva continues, **“World Honored One, I, now protect this Sutra with my spiritual powers. After the passing of the Thus Come One, I shall propagate it widely in Jambudvipa, so that it will never be cut off.** I will see to it that the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra always remains in this world.”   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **At that time Shakyamuni Buddha praised him, saying, “Good indeed, good indeed, Universal Worthy, that you can protect and aid this Sutra and bestow happiness and benefit on many living beings. You have already accomplished inconceivable merit and virtue, and deep and great compassion. From the distant past you have brought forth the resolve for anuttarasamyaksambodhi and have been able to make this vow to protect this Sutra with spiritual penetrations. I shall now use the power of spiritual penetrations to protect those who can receive and uphold the name of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva.”**  
Outline:  
  
C3. Description of vows.  
D1. The protection of Dharma.  
 **Commentary:**   
  
**At that time Shakyamuni Buddha praised him, saying, “Good indeed, good indeed, Universal Worthy, that you can** encourage living beings to bring forth the Bodhi mind, to read and recite, receive and uphold, write out and explain the Dharma Flower Sutra. It is wonderful that you will **protect and aid** those who uphold **this Sutra and bestow happiness and benefit on many living beings. You have already accomplished inconceivable merit and virtue, and deep and great compassion. From the distant past you have brought forth the resolve for anuttarasamyaksambodhi and have been able to make this vow to protect this Sutra with spiritual penetrations. I,** Shakyamuni Buddha, **shall now use the power of spiritual penetrations to protect those who can receive and uphold the name of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva.**  
  
**Sutra:**  
 **“Universal Worthy, if a person can receive and uphold, read, recite, properly recollect, cultivate, and write out the Dharma Flower Sutra, you should know that this person thereby sees Shakyamuni Buddha. It is as if he had heard this Sutra from the Buddha’s mouth. You should know that this person has made offerings to Shakyamuni Buddha. You should know that this person has made offerings to Shakyamuni Buddha. You should know that the Buddha has praised this person, saying, ‘Good indeed!’”   
  
“You should know that this person’s head has been rubbed by Shakyamuni Buddha’s hand, and that he has been covered by Shakyamuni Buddha’s robe.”**  
Outline:  
  
D2. The protection of people.  
E1. Teaching with inner dharmas.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
Shakyamuni Buddha calls out, **"Universal Worthy, if a person can receive and uphold, read, recite, properly recollect, cultivate, and write out the Dharma Flower Sutra, you should know that this person thereby sees Shakyamuni Buddha, it is as if he had heard this Sutra from the Buddha's mouth.** It is just as if he had personally heard Shakyamuni Buddha speak the Sutra.   
  
**“You should know that this person has made offerings to Shakyamuni Buddha. You should know that the Buddha has praised this person, saying, 'Good indeed!'”**  
  
**“You should know that this person's head has been rubbed by Shakyamuni Buddha's hand.** The Buddha has patted him on the head **and** conferred a prediction upon him. You should know that this person **has been covered by Shakyamuni Buddha's robe.”** "Patience" is his robe.  
  
**Sutra:**  
 **“A person such as this will never again be attached to worldly pleasures. He will never again be fond of the texts or manuscripts of externalist ways, nor will he enjoy drawing near such people or other evil people, be they butchers; keepers of pigs, sheep, fowl or dogs; or hunters; or panderers.”   
  
“This person’s mind will be straightforward and his memory proper. He will have the power of blessings and virtue. This person will not be tormented by the three poisons, nor will he again be tormented by jealousy, arrogance, deviant pride or overweening pride. This person will have few desires and will know contentment. He will be able to cultivate the conduct of Universal Worthy.”**  
Outline:  
  
E2. Showing the supreme cause.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**A person such as this will never again be attached to worldly pleasure. He will never again be fond of the texts or manuscripts of externalist ways, nor will he enjoy drawing near such people or other evil people, be they butchers** (chandalas); **keepers of pigs, sheep, fowl or dogs; hunters; or panderers.** “Panderer” means pimps, people who sell men’s or women's bodies for a profit.   
  
**This person's mind will be straightforward and his memory proper.** It is said, "The straight mind is the Way-place." He will have proper thoughts and recollect the principles in the Sutras. His mind will not be crooked or deviant.   
  
**He will have the power of blessings and virtue. This person will not be tormented by the three poisons**--greed, hatred, and stupidity. Because he is not greedy, he will not have a temper. Because he does not have temper, he will not be stupid. **Nor will he again be tormented by jealousy, arrogance, deviant pride or overweening pride. This person will have few desires and will know contentment.** People like this do not get angry. They have few desires and little greed, hatred or stupidity. If you have few desires, you will be content. If you are content, you will always be happy. **He will be able to cultivate the conduct of Universal Worthy.**  
  
**Sutra:**  
 **“Universal Worthy, if after the passing of the Thus Come One, in the last five hundred years, you see a person who can receive, uphold, read, and recite the Dharma Flower Sutra, you should think, ‘Before long, this person will go to the Way-place and destroy the demon hordes. He will attain anuttarasamyaksambodhi, turn the Dharma-wheel, beat upon the Dharma drum, blow the Dharma conch, let fall the Dharma rain, and soon sit on the Lion Dharma throne among the great hosts of gods and humans.”   
  
“Universal Worthy, if in the later age, there is a person who can receive, uphold, read, or recite this Sutra, he will never again be greedy for clothing, bedding, food and drink, or any necessities of life. His vows will not be in vain and in his present life he shall obtain the reward of blessings.”**  
Outline:  
  
E3. Showing the proximate result.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**Universal Worthy, if after the passing of the Thus Come One, in the last five hundred years, you see a person who can receive, uphold, read, and recite the Dharma Flower Sutra, you should think, ‘Before long, this person will go to the Way-place and destroy the demon hordes. He will attain anuttarasamyaksambodhi**--the Unsurpassed, Proper and Equal, Right Enlightenment, and **turn the Dharma wheel.** This means lecturing on the Sutras and speaking the Dharma. He is not like certain people who say that is not necessary to speak the Dharma—they turn the “wheel of stupidity” instead. He will **beat upon** and strike **the Dharma drum,** waking up the deaf and dumb. The deaf will hear and even the stupid will be able to understand. He will **blow the Dharma conch, let fall the Dharma rain, and soon sit on the Lion Dharma throne among the great hosts of gods and humans.** He will sit on the Dharma seat and speak Dharma.   
  
**Universal Worthy, if in the later age, there is a person who can receive, uphold, read, or recite this Sutra, he will never again be greedy for clothing, bedding, food and drink, or any necessities of life.** He will not think, all day long, "The food was not very good today. What shall I have tomorrow? What is good?" to the point that he cannot sleep at night. Not being greedy, he will not be concerned over which clothes look nice or where to get a good sleep. **His vows will not be in vain.** Since he is not greedy, his hopes and wishes will be fulfilled. If he was greedy, he would not get his wishes fulfilled. **And in his present life he shall obtain the reward of blessings.**  
  
**Sutra:**  
 **“If one ridicules and slanders this person, saying, ‘You’re insane! What you are doing is useless and will never amount to anything,’ his retribution will be such that in life after life he will have no eyes.”   
  
“If a person makes offerings and gives praise, then in his present life he will obtain the fruits of his reward.”   
  
“If, again, one sees a person receiving and upholding this Sutra and then speaks of his faults or evils, be they true or untrue, in his present life he will contract leprosy.”   
  
“If one ridicules him and laughs, then in life after life his teeth will be sparse and missing, his lips ugly, his nose flat, his hands and feet contorted, his eyes pointed and askew, his body stinking and filthy. He will be covered with hideous sores, pus and blood. His belly will be full of water or he will be short of breath. He will be plagued with all manner of nasty and grave illnesses.”**  
Outline:  
  
E4. Being beset with external difficulties.  
 **Commentary:**   
  
**If one ridicules and slanders this person, saying, ‘You’re insane! What you are doing is useless and will never amount to anything.** You are not going to get anything out of this,’ **his retribution will be such that in life after life he will have no eyes.** He will be blind. And so if you see blind people, you can know that they slandered those who uphold the Dharma Flower Sutra. Having knowledge of cause and effect like this is just to have wisdom. If you have wisdom you will not do stupid things again. You will not call out, 'Crazy!' when you see someone reciting a Sutra. You will not say things like, 'If you recite the Dharma Flower Sutra, can you go without eating and not be hungry?'   
  
**If a person makes offerings and gives praise** to someone who is speaking the Sutra, **then in his present life he will obtain the fruits of his reward.** He will not be blind and dumb.   
  
**If, again, one sees a person receiving and upholding this Sutra and then speaks of his faults or evils, be they true or untrue.** 'He is reciting the Sutra right now, but he is a tiger wearing a string of beads, acting like a good person.' Or you could say like a cat wearing a string of beads. The mouse thinks, 'Oh, the cat now recites the Buddha's name, he will not eat me.' But as soon as the mouse comes out of his hole, the cat grabs and eats him! Whether this person makes up stories or bring up things that actually happened in the past, as a result, **in his present life he will contract leprosy**--a kind of scaly skin disease. When you see people who have this disease, you can know they spread rumors and said evil things about a person who received and upheld the Dharma Flower Sutra.   
  
**If one ridicules him and laughs, then in life after life his teeth will be sparse and missing, his lips ugly** and puckered, **his nose flat, his hands and feet contorted**--his fingers and toes are twisted up, **his eyes pointed and askew.** If a person has three-cornered eyes, do not make friend with him or else you will be sorry. “His eyes askew” means he is evasive; he will not look at you directly. **His body** is **stinking and filthy.** If you use poison gas to poison people, as retribution you will stink. Further, **he will be covered with hideous sores, pus and blood. His belly will be** swollen and **full of water or he will be short of breath,** he cannot ever get his breath. **He will be plagued with all manner of nasty and grave illnesses**--incurable illnesses.  
  
**Sutra:**  
 **“Therefore, Universal Worthy, if one sees a person who receives and upholds this Sutra, one should welcome him from afar and revere him as one would the Buddha.”**  
Outline:  
  
E5. Concluding encouragement.  
  
**Commentary:**  
  
**Therefore, Universal Worthy, if one sees a person who receives and upholds this Sutra, one should welcome him from afar and revere him as one would the Buddha.**  
  
**Sutra:**  
 **When this chapter, “The Encouragement of Universal Worthy” had been spoken, uncountable, boundless numbers of Bodhisattvas, as many as the Ganges’ sands obtained the Dharani of a hundred thousand myriad kotis of revolutions. Bodhisattvas equal in number to the motes of dust in the three thousand great thousand worlds perfected the path of Universal Worthy.**  
Outline:  
  
C4. Benefits.  
D1. Benefits of hearing this chapter.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**When this chapter, “The Encouragement of Universal Worthy” had been spoken, uncountable, boundless numbers of Bodhisattvas, as many as the Ganges’ sands obtained the Dharani of a hundred thousand myriad kotis of revolutions.** The Dharani of revolution means that from one principle one can understand many principles. And the many principles all return to the one principle. The one is the many, and the many are the one. Through understanding one principle, you understand countless principles. Understanding countless principles, you know that they all return to the one principle. **Bodhisattvas equal in number to the motes of dust in the three thousand great thousand worlds perfected the path of Universal Worthy.**   
  
**Sutra:**  
 **When the Buddha had spoken this Sutra, Universal Worthy and all the other Bodhisattvas, Shariputra and all the Hearers, as well as the entire great assembly of gods, dragons, humans, non-humans, and so forth, all greatly rejoiced, received and upheld the Buddha’s words, made obeisance and withdrew.**  
Outline:  
  
D2. Benefits of hearing the Sutra.  
  
**Commentary:**   
  
**When the Buddha had spoken this Sutra, Universal Worthy and all the other Bodhisattvas, Shariputra**—“Shari’s son”—**and all the** great **Hearers, as well as the entire great assembly of gods, dragons, humans, non-humans, and so forth, all greatly rejoiced, received and upheld the Buddha’s words, made obeisance and withdrew.** Having heard the Dharma Flower Sutra, they bowed and went back to where they came from. This is called, "the Dharma returning to its original place."   
  
The Dharma Flower Sutra was lectured on for twenty-five months. In the West this is the first time such a long Dharma Assembly has been conducted and such a lengthy Sutra has been lectured on. I hope that you will master this Sutra and propagate it everywhere, so all living beings can obtain the wonderful advantages of the Dharma Flower Sutra. To obtain the wonderful advantages yourself and then pass them on to others is just to transmit the teaching and propagate the Buddhadharma, turn the great Dharma wheel, strike the Dharma drum, blow the Dharma conch, and let fall the great Dharma rain. You should take up this work as your personal responsibility and cause all living beings to be filled with Dharma joy.