

The background is a solid red color. Overlaid on this are several concentric, wavy lines in a slightly darker shade of red. These lines originate from the left side and curve towards the right, creating a sense of movement and depth. They are most prominent on the left side of the cover and fade slightly towards the right.

J. C. Cleary

The Lotus Sutra

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Translated by J. C. Cleary

From the Chinese translation by Kumarajiva

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Translator's Introduction

The Far Horizon

What is a modern person to make of the classical Buddhist sutras?

For the reader who has never before encountered Buddhism in its original presentations, the usual reaction is surprise: "I didn't know Buddhism was like this!" It is difficult not to be impressed by the rush of images, by the expanded scales of time and space, by the power of the visions.

In essence, Buddhist sutras are intended to communicate the teaching of enlightenment. Buddhist sutras are designed to interact with your mind, to show you another view of the world and another view of yourself. The challenge is to make yourself available for this interaction to take place.

Of course, the Buddhist sutras can be approached as we would approach any classical texts. We can focus our attention on the concepts they set forth, the symbolism they use, the styles of the narratives, the methods of reasoning, the worldview the texts reflect. We can use the Buddhist sutras as a window into the culture and society and religious imagination of the classical Indian world.

We can come at the Buddhist sutras with the orientations our contemporary culture applies to religious materials generally – wanting to believe, wanting to reject, wanting to argue, wanting to interpret.

For those who are hungry for something transcendent to believe in, the sutras are marvelous for the emotions. They offer beautiful visions, promises of salvation, superhuman benefactors. They present visions of a grander reality that puts the trials and tribulations of everyday existence in the shade.

For the skeptics, the sutras appear as mythology, as easy to reject as any religious belief system or any other body of religious texts. They describe supernatural beings and worlds beyond our world. They present visions spanning countless galaxies and measureless eons of time. But what if the sutras are metaphor, a code? What are the sutras really saying?

The conceptual content of the sutras hits both those who are looking for something reassuring to believe in and those who consider themselves rational skeptics. People are either intrigued, or they are scandalized.

The Buddhist sutras tell us that we are not who we think we are. They say that our perceptions are shaped by our social conditioning, that in our business-as-usual mindset we are out of touch with true reality, that our thoughts and emotions are like dreams and illusions. Who wants to hear this?

The Buddhist sutras tell us that we are more than we think we are. They say that there is a way out of a petty, self-centered life dominated by hopes and dreams, fears and frustrations. They say

we can live on another level. They assert that our true destiny is to function as enlightened beings and bringers of enlightenment to others. Who is ready to undertake such a mission?

Conceptual Level: The Journey to Enlightenment

The conceptual content of the *Lotus Sutra* poses a challenge to anyone in any era. The *Lotus Sutra* says to us: Expand your horizons, open up to reality as it is. There is more to reality than what the worldview of your culture offers you. There is more to you than what you imagine yourself to be, more to you than your personal dramas, your hopes and dreams, your feelings and ambitions. There is more to reality than the history of your time, as you and the people around you imagine your history to be. Expand your horizons, let reality in, so you can live in your local world free from illusions and ready to work to serve truth.

In the *Lotus Sutra* , the Buddha explains the project like this:

“The buddhas have appeared in the world because they wanted to show the enlightened perception of the buddhas to living beings.

“They have appeared in the world because they wanted to enable living beings to awaken to the enlightened perception of the buddhas.

“They have appeared in the world because they wanted to enable living beings to enter upon the path to the enlightened perception of the buddhas.

“This is what it means to say that all the enlightened ones have appeared in the world for the sake of One Great Cause.”

The principal narrator in the *Lotus Sutra* is Shakyamuni Buddha. He may be better known to you under the name Gautama, or Siddhartha, the historical founder of Buddhism. In the sutras of the Greater Journey, he is typically called Shakyamuni, “sage of the Shakyas,” after the name of the royal clan into which he was born in the sixth century before the Common Era in the territory of today’s Nepal. From the perspective of the Greater Journey, Shakyamuni Buddha was just one among the countless numbers of enlightened beings who set forth the teaching of truth in the past, present, and future in all worlds where there are intelligent living beings.

Those who achieve enlightened perception are known as buddhas. The word “buddha” in Sanskrit means “enlightened one.” The buddhas are often referred to by another Sanskrit term that means “the ones who have arrived at reality.”

Enlightened perception means seeing things as they are, without interposing an overlay of artificial categories, without measuring everything in terms of a self-centered agenda, without emotional and cognitive distortion. Enlightened perception brings the ability to see the true patterns of causation at work in the world and to take effective action – to see where the good lies and how it can be achieved. It brings freedom from the self-seeking, “me-against-them” orientation that comes to us with our human heritage. It liberates the mind from the delusion that the artificial categories imposed by language, culture, and social conditioning are anything more than artificial.

The Buddhist teaching is that all of us have a potential for enlightened perception. The message of the *Lotus Sutra* is that

developing enlightened perception is the ultimate goal of the Buddhist path, though the seeker may have to travel through many intermediate stations along the way. The idea that Buddhism takes a pessimistic view of life is a cliché found in many books on comparative religion in the West. But in fact, compared to our contemporary culture, Buddhism has an optimistic view of human potential. We are not just glorified animals, driven by our genetic programming to band together in hierarchical tribes and fight for supremacy, to strive for primal satisfactions and vie for social status. We are not inevitably prisoners of the worldviews we have been induced to follow or captives of their futile delusions. We are not just rats in the maze built for us by history and culture. According to the *Lotus Sutra*, there is more to us than that – we are all children of Buddha. We just have to set to work to reclaim our heritage and bring our inherent potential for enlightened perception to life.

Skill in Means

The *Lotus Sutra* repeatedly describes the basic methodology of the teaching of enlightenment, which is known as “skill in means.”

Guided by the principle of skill in means, real Buddhist teaching does not follow any simple formula. It does not establish a set of doctrines that must be accepted as absolute truth by its adherents. It does not define itself in terms of a specific set of rules, rituals, texts, beliefs, commandments, or sacred scriptures. From a Buddhist point of view, a dogmatic approach to religion can only be another example of delusion in action.

The Buddhist observation is that there is no single formulation that can encompass the totality of truth, no uniform technique that

can lead everyone everywhere to realization. True teaching is what is conducive to progress toward enlightenment, in the context of a specific situation, audience, and moment in time. The teaching that works for you today might not be the teaching that worked for someone else yesterday. It takes the insight of the enlightened teacher to adjust the teaching to the needs of the particular person being taught, just as it takes the skill of the physician to prescribe medicine that will cure the sickness of the particular patient.

The enlightened teachers designed their work with this in view. They knew that it is entirely possible for a particular concept or story or practice to help people in one community at a certain moment in history to wake up to their real situation, act more compassionately, become more generous, and make spiritual progress, while in another context, with another community, that very same concept or story or practice could become an idol or an obsession, reinforcing their delusions and leading them to spiritual stagnation.

This is why the wisdom traditions have often changed shape over time, as they adapted to changing circumstances in the human community. This adaptive change, this skill in means, is the hallmark of real wisdom active in the world.

So if their mission is to teach, those who have arrived at the reality must be able to read the patterns of belief and action of the people around them, understand how people perceive and how they think, and then devise strategies to open them up to truth. These strategies taken as a whole form the Buddhist teaching as it unfolds in practice. This is the idea of skill in means.

The *Lotus Sutra* returns to this central theme again and again. It illustrates this process extending through past, present, and future, as the enlightened teachers operate using skill in means according to the needs of each given time and place. In the words of the sutra, the enlightened teachers employ “countless expedient means, all kinds of causes and conditions, comparisons, metaphors, terminologies, in order to set forth the teachings for the sake of living beings – these teachings are all the One Journey to Enlightenment. Thus do all living beings, hearing the teachings from enlightened beings, ultimately attain all-knowledge.”

But, despite the diversity of expedient means adapted by the enlightened teachers, they are all serving the same purpose, as the Buddha explains:

“All the enlightened ones have appeared in the world for the sake of One Great Cause.

“All the enlightened ones have appeared in the world in order to enable living beings to open up their enlightened perception and attain purity.

“They have appeared in the world because they wanted to show the enlightened perception of the buddhas to living beings.

“They have appeared in the world because they wanted to enable living beings to awaken to the enlightened perception of the buddhas.

“They have appeared in the world because they wanted to enable living beings to enter upon the path to the enlightened perception of the buddhas.

“This is what it means to say that all the enlightened ones have appeared in the world for the sake of One Great Cause.”

For the enlightened ones themselves, the great teaching mission goes on forever, in an endless variety of forms. Absolute truth is one and all-pervasive; the teaching of truth takes on concrete forms in response to what is necessary in varying circumstances. As the *Lotus Sutra* puts it:

This Truth rests in the abode of Truth, and always abides
amid worldly forms.

Once they have come to know this Truth at the site of
enlightenment,

The true teachers explain it with expedient means.

The Three Journeys

The *Lotus Sutra* speaks again and again of “the three journeys” or “the three vehicles” or “the three routes,” referring to three characteristic approaches to the Buddhist path.

The first route is taken by those who hear in the Buddhist teaching a way out of the frustrations and confusion and suffering inherent in self-centered life. The followers of the first route hope to reach nirvana, which they take to mean a place where they will finally find peace and harmony, nirvana beyond the world, nirvana beyond all the vagaries of their personal emotions, hopes, and fears. They may join special communities apart from the workaday world, adopt strict rules of discipline, strive to purify themselves and conquer their human passions and achieve inner peace. This is the journey of the seekers of personal salvation. (The Sanskrit term for a

person who takes this approach is *shravaka* , which literally means “hearer” or “disciple.”)

The *Lotus Sutra* advises that the enlightened teachers set forth the journey to nirvana through personal purification as an expedient teaching, designed for those who would otherwise be frightened or confused by the full scope of the journey to enlightenment. For some people it may be a useful way station, a resting place on the greater journey, but it is not the final destination.

To illustrate this idea, the sutra tells a story. A group of travelers has set out on a journey to find a treasure. The road is long and arduous, but the wayfarers are fortunate to have a wise guide. Midway through the journey, the travelers are feeling exhausted and discouraged and want to give up and turn back. The guide does not want them to miss their chance to reach the treasure, so he resorts to an expedient. With his magical powers, he conjures up an illusory citadel, a walled city in the middle of the desolate wilderness, where the travelers can stop and rest until they feel safe again and recover their strength. The guide’s stratagem works. The travelers rest for a while in the illusory citadel, until they feel refreshed enough to continue their journey. At this point the guide reveals the secret: “Come on, the treasure is near. The great citadel where we just were was something I conjured up, so you could stop and rest.”

The Buddha goes on to explain that the illusory citadel represents nirvana, as imagined by seekers of personal salvation who think of nirvana as an escape from life in the world.

I have been like this too, in acting as everyone’s guide –

I have seen that seekers of the Path get tired and give up
midway through the journey,
And are unable to cross over birth-and-death
And the perilous roads of affliction.
Therefore I have used the power of expedient means
And spoken to you of nirvana as a resting place.
I have told you that if you extinguish suffering,
Everything you have to do will have been accomplished.
Now I am telling you how things really are –
What you have attained is not nirvana.
You must put forth a great effort
For the all-knowledge of the enlightened ones.

There are clear lessons here. People who imitate Buddhist practices in pursuit of escapist aims are misguided. Would-be Buddhists whose “practice” leaves them withdrawn, self-involved, and unable to interact with people in ordinary situations are taking the wrong path. The goal of Buddhist practice is not to feel good about yourself and become comfortably numb to the problems of the outside world. Subduing desires and detaching from personal feelings is a means, not an end. Nirvana is just a resting place, not the true destination of the Buddhist Path.

The *Lotus Sutra* describes a second journey, called the journey of the solitary illuminates. (In Sanskrit, the person who takes this approach is called a *pratyeka buddha*, which literally means “solitary enlightened one.”)

Those who take this route effectively reorganize their perceptions in light of the Buddhist teaching on interdependent causation. They take to heart the basic observation that all phenomena are part of an endless interplay of cause and effect. They face the fact that in reality there are no independent entities with fixed identities, but only an array of intertwined processes. They achieve the basic detachment that comes with recognizing that things only exist relative to the context that engenders them.

Again, according to the sutra, this is a means, not an end. A solitary illuminate may be better off than an ordinary person drowning in delusion, but there is still something missing: enlightened engagement in the world, service to the cause of universal enlightenment, the ability not only to perceive the true patterns of cause and effect, but also to devise effective action for the real good.

The message which the *Lotus Sutra* frequently emphasizes is that these two journeys – the journey of the seekers of personal salvation and the journey of the solitary illuminates – were only set forth by the enlightened teachers as an exercise in skill in means, to meet the needs of those people who were perhaps not yet ready for the full force of the teaching of enlightenment.

The Buddha explains this to one of his followers, a senior monk: “Did I not say earlier that the enlightened ones explain the Teaching using all sorts of causes and conditions, metaphors and explanations, all sorts of terminology, all sorts of expedient means, all for the sake of ultimate perfect enlightenment? This is because all

the explanations the enlightened ones give are to teach people how to be bodhisattvas.”

The *Lotus Sutra* returns to this lesson again and again: the real purpose of the Buddhist teaching is to teach people how to function in the world as bodhisattvas. It is the journey of the bodhisattvas that is the ultimate teaching, the One Journey.

Bodhisattva means “enlightening being.” The bodhisattvas are those who, already enlightened themselves, work for the benefit and eventual enlightenment of others.

As described in Buddhist classics like the *Flower Ornament Sutra*, bodhisattvas come in all forms and are at work in all areas of life. They may operate as healers and nurturers, as mentors and teachers and good neighbors, as designers and scientists and inventors and technical experts, as farmers and craftspeople and builders, as artists, musicians, and entertainers, as community organizers and entrepreneurs and diplomats and politicians. Their modus operandi is detached compassion, based on facing reality as it is, without an overlay of wishful thinking. The bodhisattva code of action is constant service to the “One Great Cause” of communicating the reality of enlightenment. Their tools are generosity, discipline, patience, dedication and focus, meditative concentration, and wisdom.

It is not hard to see why people find the bodhisattva path daunting, frightening, confusing. Facing the world without illusions seems hard enough: who could dare to grapple with the world at the practical level and work to spread awareness of truth and bring real benefits to people? This is why, the *Lotus Sutra* tells us, the

enlightened teachers use their skill in means to lead people along gradually, focusing them on lesser goals at first, until they make some progress and are ready to hear about the infinite journey of the bodhisattvas.

The Infinite Journey

The *Lotus Sutra* continually invites us to move beyond our ordinary views of time and space. Our human world has its built-in scales of space and time. Where I live – that is the center of the world. My body, my self, my friends, my neighborhood, my community, my society. Yesterday, today, tomorrow. This week, last week, next week. This year, last year, next year. Perhaps a couple of generations on either side of one lifetime: my grandparents, my parents, me, my children, my grandchildren. The fifty thousand years our species has taken to spread across the earth boggles the ordinary mind. The million-year timespans of geological time are even more difficult to take in.

Theoretically, of course, science has given us modern people the opportunity to expand our range of perception in the area of space and time and to get outside our narrow, everyday scale of things. People familiar with modern cosmology know that our home planet, so huge from our human perspective, is just a tiny speck in the universe, that our dear sun is a minor star twenty-four thousand light-years or so from the center of a galaxy, the Milky Way, which itself is just one of at least a hundred billion galaxies, each containing a hundred billion or more stars.

The photographs taken by the Hubble Space Telescope are there on the web for all to see. But how many of us have taken

advantage of the opportunities science offers to let our perceptions move beyond naïve, human-centric notions of space and time? Remember, when you look up at the night sky, you are seeing not only *space* , but also *time* . The light from the distant stars takes time to reach us on earth, so you are seeing each star at a certain time in its past. Thus, in a single moment for you, as you look at the sky, you are seeing many moments in time, one for every star in the sky.

Modern readers are often puzzled when they find classic Buddhist texts like the *Lotus Sutra* dealing in what we would call astronomical distances and timespans. What sort of people so long ago knew about such things? What were the Buddhist teachers trying to tell their audience? Surely they are inviting us to step outside the narrow confines of time and space in which most people live their lives and make their plans.

When describing the bodhisattva path, the *Lotus Sutra* regularly presents a perspective of long ages of learning and service, leading to the eventual unfolding of enlightened perception. The Buddha tells of his own long journey toward enlightenment, and when he gives others predictions of their own future awakening, this always follows an extended period of serving and learning from countless enlightened beings over the eons. Here's an example:

To everyone present here I announce this:

With the eye of an enlightened one I see

That in a future world, after countless eons, [my disciple]
Kashyapa will become a buddha.

In future lifetimes he will get to meet and serve millions of
enlightened ones.

He will cultivate pure practice in the service of the wisdom of
the enlightened ones.

He will support and serve the peerless enlightened ones,
And cultivate all forms of unsurpassed wisdom.

In his final incarnation, he will succeed in becoming a
buddha.

For us here and now, the conceptual message of the *Lotus Sutra* is clear: don't be scared off by the grandeur of the bodhisattva mission, don't be in a hurry, don't lose heart, don't give up, purify your intent of selfish motives, lend a hand in whatever form you are able. Take it on faith that you must do your part in the great enterprise of communicating truth that continues through the ages. When you have made progress and the time is ripe, you will find that you have become part of a vast multitude of beings working for universal enlightenment.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Buddha was staying on Vulture Peak, near the Royal City.

With him was an assembly of great monastics, numbering twelve thousand in all. All of them were worthy ones, who had completely ended all defilements and had no more afflictions, who had arrived at their own individual salvation. These were people who had put an end to all bondage to existence, people whose minds were independent.

Present there were [the Buddha's senior disciples] Ajnata Kaundinya, Ashavati, Vashpa, Mahanaman, Bhadraka, Maha Kashyapa, Kashyapa of Uruvilva, Kashyapa of Gaya, Shariputra, Maha Maudgalyayana, Mahakatyayana, Aniruddha, Revata, Kapphina, Gavampati, Pilindavatsa, Bakkula, Bharadvaga, Mahakaushthila, Nanda, Upananda, Sundara Nanda, Purna Maitrayaniputra, Subhūti, and Rahula.

Besides the great worthy ones, there were also two thousand people in the stage of study and the stage beyond study.

Also present was the nun Mahaprajapati [the Buddha's aunt], with her retinue of six thousand nuns. The nun Yasodhara [the woman who was married to the Buddha when he was still a prince], the mother of [their son] Rahula, was there with her companions.

Also present were eighty thousand great bodhisattvas who had reached the stage where there is no falling back from complete

perfect enlightenment.

All of these great bodhisattvas had attained the power to preserve total concentration, all of them could teach joyously and eloquently, all of them turned the Wheel of the Teaching that never goes back. All of them had served countless hundreds of thousands of buddhas, all of them had planted the roots of virtue in the presence of the buddhas, all of them were always being acclaimed by the buddhas.

All of these great bodhisattvas used compassion to perfect themselves and skillfully entered into the wisdom of the enlightened. All of them had mastered Great Wisdom and reached the Other Shore. All of them were renowned throughout countless worlds. All of them were able to save countless hundreds of thousands of living beings.

Also present there were [the great bodhisattvas] Manjushri, Avalokiteshvara, Mahasthamaprapta, Ever Advancing, Indefatigable, Jewel Palm, Medicine King, Brave Donor, Jewel Moon, Light of the Moon, Full Moon, Great Strength, Infinite Power, Transcending the Three Realms, Fruit of Goodness, Maitreya, Heap of Jewels, Guiding Teacher.

Altogether there were eighty thousand great bodhisattvas like these in attendance at the assembly.

At that time, the Lord of the Gods was there in the assembly, accompanied by his retinue of two hundred thousand divinities.

Also present were the divinities Rare Moon, Universal Fragrance, and Jewel Light, and also the Four Heavenly Kings,

accompanied by their retinues of a hundred thousand divinities.

Also in the assembly were the divinities Sovereign Lord and Great Sovereignty, accompanied by three hundred thousand divine attendants.

Also present were the King of the Gods, the lord of our world Endurance, the Great God Halo of Flame, the Great God Radiance of Light, and other great gods, accompanied by their retinues of two thousand divinities.

Also in the assembly were eight kings of the ocean spirits: King Nanda, King Upananda, King Sagara, King Vasuki, King Takshaka, King Anavatapta, King Manasvin, and King Utpalaka, each accompanied by many hundreds of thousands of attendants.

Also present were four kings of the loving spirits: King Teaching, King Wondrous Teaching, King Great Teaching, and King Upholding the Teaching, each with a retinue of hundreds of thousands of attendants.

Also present were four kings of the celestial musicians: King Bliss, King Blissful Sound, King Beauty, and King Beautiful Sound, each with hundreds of thousands of companions.

Also present were four kings of the jealous spirits: King Balin , King Kharaskandha , King Vemachitrin , and King Rahu , each with a retinue of hundreds of thousands of attendants.

Also present were four kings of the giant rocs: King Great Power , King Giant Body , King Great Fullness , and King Does as He Pleases , each with a retinue of hundreds of thousands of companions.

Also in the assembly was Prince Ajatashatru, son of Queen Vaidehi, with several hundred thousand attendants.

Each one of these beings paid homage to the Buddha, then stepped back and sat off to one side.

At that time, the World Honored One, the Buddha, was surrounded by all these beings offering their support and reverence and respect and praise.

The World Honored One spoke a Mahayana sutra, called *Infinite Truths*, for the sake of the bodhisattvas present, teaching the methods of the bodhisattvas, which are protected by the buddhas.

After the Buddha had set forth this sutra, he sat cross-legged and entered into concentration at the locus of Infinite Truths, so that neither his body nor his mind stirred.

At that moment, fragrant heavenly flowers rained down from the sky, coming down over the Buddha and all in the assembly, and the whole of the world in which the Buddha was teaching trembled under the impact.

And then all the beings in the great assembly – monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, celestial beings and ocean spirits, earth spirits and celestial musicians, jealous spirits and loving spirits and spirits of eternal time, humans and nonhumans, all the minor kings and wheel-turning sage monarchs – all experienced what they had never before experienced. Joyously joining their palms in salute, they looked upon the Buddha with a unified mind.

At that moment the Buddha emitted a ray of light from the white hair between his eyebrows, illuminating eighteen thousand worlds to

the east, permeating them all with light, from the lowest endless hell to the highest heaven.

The light was visible throughout this world of ours, visible to all sentient beings in the six planes of existence ^[1] in this world, and visible to all the present enlightened ones in this world, as they heard all the teachings propounded by the enlightened ones.

The light showed all the monks and nuns and laymen and laywomen cultivating spiritual practice and attaining enlightenment.

The light showed all the great bodhisattvas, their causes and conditions, their decisive liberation, their characteristics and appearances, as they travel the bodhisattva path.

The light also showed the ultimate nirvana of all the buddhas, and the jeweled monuments erected to them after their deaths.

Then the bodhisattva Maitreya had this thought:

“Right now the World Honored One is manifesting these signs of spiritual transformation. What is his reason for displaying these marvels? Right now, as the World Honored One enters into concentration, this is something inconceivable, this is something rarely seen. Whom should I ask about this? Who would be able to answer?”

But then the bodhisattva Maitreya thought: “I should ask Manjushri, the Prince of the Teaching. He has been close to and served countless enlightened ones in the past, and he has surely seen this kind of rare vision. I will ask him.”

At the same moment, monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, celestial beings and ocean spirits, earth spirits and celestial musicians, jealous spirits and loving spirits and spirits of eternal time were also thinking the same thing: “Whom should we ask about this display of spiritual power manifested by the Buddha with this light?”

Then the bodhisattva Maitreya, wanting to resolve his own doubts and seeing the same intention in all the monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, celestial beings and ocean spirits, earth spirits and celestial musicians, jealous spirits and loving spirits and spirits of eternal time, asked Manjushri:

“What was the reason for this auspicious display of spiritual powers [in which the Buddha] emitted a great light that shone through eighteen thousand lands in the east, making visible the adornments of these buddha-realms?”

Then in order to reiterate his meaning, the bodhisattva Maitreya asked the question in verse:

Oh Manjushri!

Why did our teacher send out a light from the hair between
his eyebrows to illuminate everything everywhere?

Why did flowers rain from the sky, why did the perfumed
breeze gladden the hearts of the assembly?

Because of this, all lands were adorned and purified, and
this world of ours shook and trembled.

All those assembled here felt joy, their bodies and minds
were filled with delight,

They experienced something they had never experienced
before.

The light from between the Buddha's eyebrows shined on
the eighty-four thousand worlds of the east,

And all sparkled with a golden luster.

The light shined from the lowest hell, to the highest heaven.

In all the worlds, all sentient beings in the six planes of
existence

All appeared in this light –

Driven by birth and death, enmeshed in good and bad
actions,

Experiencing good and bad consequences.

And they too saw all the enlightened ones, the sage leaders
and wise teachers,

Expounding the teachings of supreme subtle wonder,

Their voices pure and clear, mellow and gentle,

As they taught the bodhisattvas countless millions and
billions of lessons

In a profound and subtle holy language, that made people
feel joy to hear it.

In each and every world, the enlightened ones set forth the
True Teaching, with all its causes and conditions,

With innumerable metaphors, they clarified the Teaching of
the Buddhas,

And opened the way to enlightenment for sentient beings.

For people experiencing suffering, alienation, old age,
sickness, and death,

They spoke of nirvana, and the ultimate end of all
sufferings.

For people blessed with good fortune, who have served the
enlightened ones, who are intent on the Supreme
Truth,

They explained how to reach enlightenment by
contemplating the nexus of causes and conditions.

For those children of the buddhas who cultivate all kinds of
spiritual practices, and seek supreme wisdom,

They explained the Pure Path.

Oh Manjushri,

Let me briefly relate some of what I saw here today, of all
the myriad things that I saw.

Here in this land I saw countless bodhisattvas seeking the
Path to Enlightenment through all sorts of causes and
conditions –

Some were practicing charity,

Happily giving away gold and silver and all sorts of precious
gems and pearls,

Giving away splendid carriages decorated with diamonds
and jewels.

They were returning to the Path to Enlightenment, vowing to
achieve this Great Journey,

Supreme in the three realms, acclaimed by all the
enlightened ones.

Some bodhisattvas were giving away jeweled chariots with
teams of horses and lavishly adorned canopies.

I also saw bodhisattvas relinquishing their own flesh and
blood, relinquishing their spouses and children,
seeking the Supreme Path.

I also saw bodhisattvas joyously sacrificing their own eyes,
their own bodies, to seek the wisdom of the
enlightened ones.

Oh Manjushri,

I saw kings going to where the enlightened ones were, to
ask about the Supreme Path –

Kings who then abandoned their pleasure gardens, palaces,
and servitors,

And cut off their hair and put on the robes of those seeking
truth.

I saw bodhisattvas living as mendicant monks, dwelling in
solitude in quiet places, happily reciting the scriptures.

I saw bodhisattvas bravely making spiritual progress, going
deep in the mountains, contemplating the Path to
Enlightenment.

I saw people detaching themselves from desire,

Dwelling upon emptiness, cultivating meditative
concentration, and attaining the five spiritual powers.

I saw bodhisattvas in peaceful meditation with their palms
joined, praising the Kings of the Teaching with
thousands of verses.

I saw bodhisattvas with profound wisdom and strong will,
Who were able to ask questions of the enlightened beings,
And accept and persevere in what they learned.

I saw children of the buddhas fully endowed with both
concentration and wisdom,

Explaining the Teaching to the multitudes by means of
countless parables,

Joyously explaining the Teaching, guiding the bodhisattvas,
Defeating the armies of delusive demons, beating the drum
of the Teaching.

I saw bodhisattvas sitting in quiet stillness, not rejoicing in
the respect offered by celestial beings and ocean
spirits.

I saw bodhisattvas in the forests sending out light that
rescued beings from the sufferings of hell,

Enabling them to enter into the Path to Enlightenment.

I saw children of the buddhas who never slept as they
traversed the forests,

Zealously seeking the Path to Enlightenment.

I saw them fully equipped with discipline, with impeccable
conduct,

Pure as precious pearls, in order to seek the Path to
Enlightenment.

I saw children of the buddhas who patiently endured insult,
Putting up with the slanders and attacks of arrogant people,
Who were able to endure it all, in order to seek the Path to
Enlightenment.

I saw bodhisattvas who were detached from all frivolity and
ignorant companions,
Who approached the wise,
Who worked single-mindedly to eliminate confusion,
Who dwelt in the mountain forests reining in their thoughts,
Persevering over the course of thousands of years, in order
to seek the Path to Enlightenment.

I saw bodhisattvas offering the enlightened ones and their
students all sorts of delicious food and drink and
medicinal potions and fine garments.

I saw them offering the enlightened ones and their students
thousands and millions of fine houses decorated with
sandalwood and jewels and wondrously furnished.

I saw them offering the enlightened ones and their students
pure gardens and groves, lush with flowers and fruits,
with flowing streams and clear ponds.

I saw them making all these donations of all these wondrous
things joyously, unstintingly, as they sought the
Supreme Path.

There were bodhisattvas explaining the teaching of nirvana
as peaceful extinction,

And using all sorts of teachings to instruct countless
sentient beings.

I saw bodhisattvas contemplating the inherent nature of all
phenomena as being free from duality, and like empty
space.

I also saw children of the buddhas whose minds were free
of attachments,

Who were using this subtle wondrous wisdom to seek the
Supreme Path.

Oh Manjushri,

There were also bodhisattvas who made offerings to the
relics of the enlightened ones, after their deaths.

I saw children of the buddhas building all sorts of memorial
towers and temples,

Numberless as the sands of the Ganges, adorning the
various lands –

Jeweled towers, lofty and exquisite, of stupendous height
and breadth,

Each of them adorned with thousands of banners and
pennants,

And draped with networks of pearls, like dewdrops,

With jeweled bells melodiously ringing,

And various celestial beings and ocean spirits, and beings
both human and nonhuman,

Constantly making offerings of fragrant flowers and
exquisite music.

Oh Manjushri,

All these children of Buddha and other beings were doing all
this

To honor the relics of the enlightened ones and embellish
their stupas and temples,

So that each land, just as it is, could be as special and
marvelous

As the most splendid tree in the heavens when its flowers
open and bloom.

When the Buddha sent forth the light,

All of us in this assembly saw these lands and all these
special marvels.

When the Buddha sent forth that pure light,

With the spiritual power of all the enlightened ones, and
their rare wisdom,

It illuminated innumerable lands.

When we all saw this, we experienced something we had
never experienced before.

Oh Manjushri, child of the buddhas:

I hope you will resolve everyone's doubts!

Everyone in the assembly is looking to you,

In expectation that you will favor us with your benevolence.

Why then did the World Honored One send forth such a
light?

O child of the buddhas, if you will give us the answer now,
you will resolve our doubts and fill us with joy.

What will be the benefits of the World Honored One sending
forth this light?

Did the Buddha want to explain the wondrous Truth he
found when he sat at his place of enlightenment?

Did he want to predict that we too will attain this?

Surely it is no small matter that he showed us all these
lands where enlightened ones are active,

And showed us their myriad adornments, and their
immaculate purity,

And made us see all the enlightened ones.

Oh Manjushri, you surely know that everyone in the
assembly is looking to your benevolence,

To explain to us what all this meant.

Then Manjushri said to the bodhisattva Maitreya and all those
present in the assembly:

“I think that today the World Honored One, the Buddha, wants
to expound the Great Teaching, to shower us with the rain of the
Great Teaching, to sound the trumpet of the Great Teaching, to set
forth the truth of the Great Teaching.

“I have witnessed this wondrous vision displayed by the
enlightened ones of the past. They sent forth a light like this, and
then they explained the Great Teaching.

“So we must realize that it will be the same when the Buddha
makes this light appear today. He wants to make all beings

experience the Teaching that in all worlds is hard to believe in. That is why he has produced this wondrous display today.”

[Manjushri continued:]

“Good people, innumerable inconceivable eons ago, there was a buddha called Light of the Sun and Moon. He was one who had arrived at reality, one worthy of being served, with correct, all-encompassing knowledge, fully illuminated, with perfect conduct, with world-transcending understanding, an unexcelled being, a master of giving guidance, a teacher of celestial beings and humans, a buddha, a world honored one.

“He set forth the True Teaching in ways that were good for learners at all levels, with profound and far-reaching meanings, with skillful and subtle language, pure and unalloyed, fully equipped with the marks of pure holy conduct.

“Responding to the needs of disciples seeking personal salvation and escape from suffering, he explained the teaching of the four noble truths ^[3] and taught deliverance from old age, sickness, and death, deliverance to ultimate nirvana.

“Responding to the needs of those who can become enlightened on their own through observing cause and effect, he explained the teaching of the twelve links of the causal nexus. ^[4]

“For the bodhisattvas, responding to their needs, he explained the teaching of the six means of going beyond, ^[5] to enable them to reach ultimate perfect enlightenment and achieve all-knowledge.”

[Manjushri continued:]

“Later there was another buddha who was also called Light of the Sun and Moon, and later there was another buddha who was also called Light of the Sun and Moon, and this continued through twenty thousand buddhas, all sharing this one name, all called Light of the Sun and Moon, all sharing the same family name, ‘Bharadvaja’ [which means ‘Sharp Faculties’].

“You must realize, Maitreya, that each of these enlightened beings had the same name, Light of the Sun and Moon, and fully merited the ten epithets of an enlightened one. ^[6]—The teaching that they set forth was [good for learners at all levels], good at the beginning, good in the middle, and good at the end.

“The last of these enlightened ones, before he left his life as a householder, had eight royal sons. The first was named Intent; the second, Good Intent; the third Measureless Intent; the fourth, Precious Intent; the fifth, Increasing Intent; the six, Intent Eliminating Doubts; the seventh, Resounding Intent; the eighth, Intent on Truth.

“These eight royal sons were virtuous lords, and each led a realm.

“When these eight princes heard that their father had left his worldly life as a king, and attained ultimate perfect enlightenment, they all abandoned their thrones and followed their father’s example in leaving secular life behind.

“They became intent on the Great Journey, and consistently practiced pure conduct, and all became teachers of the Dharma, and

[over time] planted the roots of goodness with tens of thousands of enlightened ones.

“At that time, the Buddha Light of the Sun and Moon expounded a sutra of the Great Journey, called *Infinite Truths* , teaching the bodhisattvas, whom the enlightened ones protect and keep in mind.

“After he had finished expounding the sutra, he sat down cross-legged amid the great assembly, and entered in the concentration of Infinite Truths, so that neither his body nor his mind was moving.

“At that moment, flowers rained down from the sky and showered down upon the Buddha Light of the Sun and Moon and the whole assembly. All the lands where enlightened ones were actively teaching trembled and quaked.

“And then all the beings in the assembly – monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, celestial beings and ocean spirits, earth spirits and celestial musicians, jealous spirits and loving spirits and spirits of eternal time, humans and nonhumans, all the minor kings and wheel-turning sage monarchs – all experienced something they had never experienced before. Joyously joining their palms together in salute, they looked upon the Buddha Light of the Sun and Moon with a unified mind.

“At that moment the Buddha Light of the Sun and Moon emitted a ray of light from the white hair between his eyebrows, illuminating eighteen thousand worlds to the east, suffusing them all with light.

“You must realize, Maitreya, that in the assembly at that time were two billion bodhisattvas joyously wishing to listen to the

Teaching.

“All these bodhisattvas saw this light illuminating the lands where enlightened ones were active and experienced something they had never experienced before. They wanted to know the reason why the Buddha had sent forth this light.

“There was a bodhisattva there named Wondrous Light, who had eight hundred disciples.

“Then the Buddha Light of the Sun and Moon arose from his concentration and set forth a sutra of the Great Journey, on behalf of the bodhisattva Wondrous Light, which was called the *Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Truth* , expounding the teaching for the bodhisattvas who are protected and remembered by the buddhas.

”The Buddha Light of the Sun and Moon spoke this sutra for sixty eons without getting up from his seat, and those listening in the assembly sat in one place for sixty eons moving neither body nor mind, listening to what the Buddha was saying, and yet the whole experience seemed to take no longer than the time it takes to eat a meal. During the whole time no one in the assembly felt any physical or mental discomfort or fatigue.

“After the Buddha Light of the Sun and Moon had spoken this sutra for sixty eons, he announced to the whole assembly of diverse beings, ‘At midnight tonight, I will enter final nirvana.’

“There was a bodhisattva present named Storehouse of Virtue, and the Buddha Light of the Sun and Moon gave a prediction that he would be enlightened, announcing to the assembled listeners: ‘This bodhisattva Storehouse of Virtue will become enlightened, and he

will be called one who has arrived at reality, the worthy one, the perfectly enlightened one, Pure Body.'

"After giving this prediction of enlightenment, at midnight the Buddha Light of the Sun and Moon entered final nirvana without remainder.

"After the final extinction of this enlightened being, the bodhisattva Wondrous Light preserved this sutra called the *Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Truth* and taught it to people for a full eighty eons.

"The eight princely sons of the Buddha Light of the Sun and Moon all took the bodhisattva Wondrous Light as their teacher, and Wondrous Light taught and transformed them and enabled them to achieve solid ultimate perfect enlightenment.

"After serving innumerable thousands and millions of enlightened beings, these princely sons all consummated the Path of Enlightenment. The last among them to achieve buddhahood was named Light Maker.

"Among the eight hundred disciples [of the Buddha Light Maker], there was one disciple called Seeker of Renown. He was eager for gain and for people to support him, and though he had read and recited many sutras, he had not benefited from them, and there was much he had forgotten and neglected. This is why he was called Seeker of Renown.

"Nevertheless, this man had also planted the causal conditions of the roots of goodness, and so he had the opportunity [over many

lifetimes] to encounter numberless enlightened beings, to serve them, to offer them respect, to honor them, to praise them.

“You should be aware, Maitreya, that the one who, at that time, was the bodhisattva Wondrous Light was none other than an incarnation of me, and that the one who was called Seeker of Renown was an incarnation of you.

“When we see this wondrous display now, it is no different from what we saw originally. I therefore think that today [the Buddha, as] one who has arrived at reality, is expounding a sutra of the Great Journey called the *Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Truth* , teaching the methods of the bodhisattvas who are protected and remembered by the enlightened ones.”

At that time, in order to reiterate this message to the great assembly, Manjushri spoke a verse:

I remember in a past life, countless eons ago,
There was a buddha, honored among humans, called Light
of the Sun and Moon.
This world honored one expounded the teachings, and
saved countless living beings.
He enabled countless bodhisattvas to enter into the wisdom
of the enlightened ones.
Before he left behind the householder’s life, he had
begotten eight royal sons –
When they saw their sagely father leave home, they
followed him and practiced pure conduct.

This buddha taught the Great Journey in a sutra called
Infinite Truths to various great assemblies,
Setting forth for them an all-encompassing analysis.
When this buddha had finished expounding this sutra,
He sat cross-legged on the teacher's seat and entered a
state of concentration called the Site of Infinite Truths

—

Flowers rained down from the sky, celestial drums
spontaneously sounded,
The celestial beings and ocean spirits, the demons and
spirits, made offerings to the enlightened one, honored
among humans,
And at that instant all the buddha-lands quaked.
The Buddha Light of the Sun and Moon sent forth a light
from between his eyebrows that made many marvels
appear.
This light shone through eighteen thousand buddha-lands to
the east,
Showing all living beings in the midst of the karmic results of
birth and death.
Buddha-lands were also displayed, adorned with masses of
jewels,
Glittering with lapis and crystal, lit up with the light of the
Buddha.
The light showed multitudes of gods and humans, ocean
spirits and earth spirits, celestial musicians and loving

spirits,

All making offerings to this buddha.

The lights also showed various beings who had arrived at
reality, freely achieving enlightenment:

Their bodies shone with a golden glow, dignified and
wondrous.

Like golden images appearing in a pure crystal, the world
honored ones were there amid great assemblies,

Setting forth the profound truths of the Teaching.

In every buddha-land, there were countless multitudes of
seekers of personal salvation,

All appearing in the radiance of the light from the Buddha.

There were monks and nuns, living in the mountain forests,
Working diligently at upholding pure discipline, as if
guarding a bright pearl.

Also shown illuminated in the light from the Buddha were
bodhisattvas practicing generosity and patience,

Numberless as the sands of the Ganges.

Also shown in the light were bodhisattvas who had entered
deeply into meditative concentration,

Whose minds were still and unmoving, as they sought the
Supreme Path.

Also shown in the light were bodhisattvas who knew the
inherent stillness of phenomena,

Who were active in their lands imparting the Teaching and
seeking the Buddha Path.

When the various beings in the assembly beheld the
Buddha Light of the Sun and Moon
Manifesting the power of his great spiritual penetration,
Their minds were all filled with joy –
They all asked themselves, “What is the causal basis of this
event?”

The one served and honored by gods and humans then
rose from his concentration state
And commended the bodhisattva Wondrous Light:
“You are the eyes of the world –
All these beings will put their trust in you –
You can faithfully uphold the Treasury of the Teaching –
You alone can understand by direct experience the teaching
I have set forth.”

After the World Honored One [Light of the Sun and Moon]
had praised him, Wondrous Light was full of joy.
The World Honored One [Light of the Sun and Moon] spoke
this *Lotus Flower Sutra* for a full sixty eons without
rising from his seat.

The teacher Wondrous Light was able to accept and uphold
all the supreme wondrous teachings the Buddha set
forth.

The Buddha spoke this *Lotus Flower Sutra* , making the
audience rejoice,

Then announced to the assembly of gods and humans:

“I have already explained to you the true reality within all phenomena.

At midnight tonight I am going to enter nirvana.

All of you should single-mindedly dedicate yourselves to making spiritual progress, and leave behind all self-indulgence.

It is difficult to encounter the enlightened ones – you might meet one once in a hundred millions eons.”

Hearing that the Buddha was about to die, all the disciples were afflicted with sorrow.

Knowing that the Buddha’s demise would come so soon,
The Sagely Lord, the King of the Teaching, [the Buddha
Light of the Sun and Moon] comforted the great
assembly saying:

“When I die, you should not feel sorrow or fear.

The mind of this bodhisattva Treasury of Virtue has already
reached pure reality –

He will be the next to become an enlightened one.

He will be called Pure Body,

And he too will bring salvation to countless multitudes.”

The Buddha [Light of the Sun and Moon] became extinct
that night,

Like a flame being extinguished when the fuel is used up.

His relics were distributed and innumerable memorial
towers were built to contain them.

Monks and nuns numberless as the sands of the Ganges
worked even harder to make progress, seeking the
Supreme Path.

This teacher Wondrous Light upheld the Treasury of the
Buddha's Teachings,

For eighty eons he worked to disseminate the *Lotus Flower
Sutra* .

The eight royal sons were taught and transformed by
Wondrous Light –

They became strong on the Supreme Path, so they would
meet countless buddhas.

Having served these buddhas, and traveled the Great Path
accordingly, they in their turn became buddhas,

And they in their turn gave predictions of enlightenment to
their successors.

The last one in line was called the Light Maker Buddha –

The guide and teacher of the spirit immortals,

Who brought liberation to countless multitudes of beings.

This Dharma Teacher Wondrous Light once had a disciple
whose mind was lax,

Who was avid for fame and profit,

Who tirelessly sought reputation and gain.

This disciple frequented the houses of the powerful,

And abandoned what he had learned,

Neglecting it and not benefiting from it –

For this reason he was called Seeker of Renown.
Nevertheless, he also did many good deeds, and he got to
meet countless enlightened ones.

He served and supported the enlightened ones,
And followed them in traveling the Great Path
And equipping himself with generosity, discipline, patience,
energy focus, meditation, wisdom.

Now he has met [the Buddha of this era], the Lion of the
Shakyas.

In the future, he will become an enlightened one himself,
And he will be called Maitreya,
And he will deliver innumerable living beings.

That lax disciple after the death of the earlier enlightened
one – that was you.

That teacher Wondrous Light – that was me.

Now I see the Buddha Light of the Sun and Moon producing
this wondrous display of light,

And thereby I know that this enlightened one is about to
expound the *Lotus Flower Sutra*.

Today's display is like the original miraculous display – this
is the skill in means of the enlightened ones.

When this Buddha Light of the Sun and Moon today emits a
light, it is to help transmit the meaning of true reality.

Everyone here today should realize this, and join their
palms together and wholeheartedly await what is
about to happen.

The Buddha is going to shower us with the rain of Truth and bring fulfillment to those who seek the Path.

If anyone following any of the Three Journeys is harboring doubts or regrets, the Buddha is about to remove them completely.

Chapter 2: Skillful Means

At that time, the World Honored One arose peacefully from his state of concentration and said to Shariputra:

“The wisdom of the enlightened ones is very profound and beyond measure. The doorway to wisdom is hard to understand and hard to enter. Those seeking personal salvation by ending desires, and those seeking individual illumination by contemplating cause and effect, cannot understand it.

“Why is this? A buddha, an enlightened being, has been close to countless hundreds of thousands of millions of enlightened beings and has fully practiced all the infinite methods of the enlightened beings. A buddha has courageously advanced and a buddha’s name is known everywhere. A buddha has accomplished the most profound and rare teachings.

“What a buddha teaches is adapted to what is right for the time, place, and audience, but a buddha’s intent is hard to understand.

“Shariputra, after I became enlightened, I used all kinds of causes and conditions, all kinds of metaphors and explanations. I set forth the teaching in words with innumerable expedient means, in order to guide sentient beings and enable them to leave behind all attachments.

“Why? One who has arrived at reality is fully equipped with a perfected knowledge of skillful means. The knowledge of one who has arrived at reality is vast and profound and far-reaching, beyond measure, without obstruction. It is powerful and fearless. It is

endowed with meditative concentration, with the total focus of liberation. It penetrates deeply into the infinite, and achieves all those things that are never achieved any other way.

“One who has arrived at reality is able to make all kinds of analytical distinctions, to explain all teachings skillfully, in words that are soft and mild and bring joy to a multitude of minds.

“In a word, Shariputra, an enlightened one, one who has arrived at reality, has accomplished countless infinite truths that ordinary people have never experienced.

“Let’s stop right there, Shariputra. We should not speak any further.

“When it comes to the supremely rare, difficult to understand Truth achieved by the enlightened ones, its reality can only be fully communicated from one enlightened being to another: the true characteristics of phenomena as they are, their true nature, their essential body, their power, their actions, their causes and conditions, their results, their reward, and all such ultimate matters.

At that time, in order to reiterate his meaning, the One Who Arrived at Reality explained in verse:

The enlightened ones cannot be measured.

Heavenly divinities and worldly people and all kinds of living
beings

Cannot understand the enlightened ones.

They cannot fathom the powers of the enlightened ones –

Their fearlessness, their liberation, their concentration states, or any of the other phenomena of enlightenment.

The enlightened ones have traveled all the paths of practice along with numberless enlightened ones.

The profound subtle Truth is hard to see and hard to comprehend.

Having traveled all these paths to the end for countless eons,

At the site of enlightenment, they achieve the results – I have already known them all.

This great result, with all its inherent marks and meanings – These things are known only to me and all the enlightened ones of the universe.

This Truth cannot be described, words are annihilated in it.

Except for bodhisattvas strong in the power of faith,

Living beings who are not enlightened cannot understand it.

The disciples of the enlightened ones, who have served and supported the enlightened ones,

Who have ended all defilement and are living in their final incarnation –

It is beyond the power of even such people as these.

Even if the whole world were filled with people like Shariputra, using their full powers of thought and assessment,

They could not fathom the wisdom of the enlightened ones.

Even if all the worlds in the ten directions were filled with
people like Shariputra and the other leading disciples,
And they filled all the lands in all the worlds, with their full
powers of thought and assessment,
They still could not know the wisdom of the enlightened
ones.

Even if all the worlds in the ten directions were filled with
solitary illuminates, with sharp intelligence,
Free from defilement, and living their final incarnation,
innumerable as trees in a forest,
And they shared a single mind and for countless eons
attempted to understand the real wisdom of the
enlightened ones,

They could not understand even a small part of it.

Even if all the worlds in the ten directions were filled with
bodhisattvas newly intent on enlightenment,
Who were serving countless enlightened beings,
Who completely understood the meanings of the Teaching
and were well able to expound the Teaching,
And they were numerous as plants in the fields,
And they single-mindedly used their wondrous wisdom for
countless ages, all trying to figure it out,
They could not understand the wisdom of the enlightened
ones.

Even if there were bodhisattvas beyond the stage of falling
back, numberless as the sands of the Ganges,

Who single-mindedly joined together to attempt to
understand it,

Not even they could understand the wisdom of the
enlightened ones.

I also tell you this, Shariputra:

I have now already fully attained the immaculate,
inconceivable, profound, subtle Truth –

Only an enlightened one knows its characteristics –

I know them, and the enlightened beings of all the worlds of
the ten directions also know them.

You must understand, Shariputra, that there is no
divergence among the words of all the enlightened
ones.

You must have the power of great faith in the teachings the
enlightened ones have spoken.

The teachings of the world honored ones have continued
forever,

And now I must set forth the Truth.

I tell the multitudes of those seeking personal salvation, and
those following the journey of the solitary illuminates:

“I will enable you to escape from the bonds of suffering and
attain nirvana.”

Thus do we enlightened ones give forth the teachings of the
Three Journeys,

Using the power of skill in means, to enable sentient beings
to get beyond their various attachments.

Present in the assembly at that time were twelve hundred seekers of personal salvation, worthy ones like Ajnata Kaundinya, along with monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, who aspired to personal salvation by ending desires, or who sought solitary illumination by contemplating interdependent causation.

Every one of them conceived of this thought:

“Why is the World Honored One now warmly extolling skillful means and telling us that the Reality attained by the enlightened ones is extremely profound and hard to comprehend?

“Why is he telling us that the intent of the enlightened ones is hard to understand, and that seekers of personal salvation and solitary illumination cannot reach that level?

“If the Buddha has taught a single idea of liberation, then we too have accepted this teaching and arrived at nirvana. But now we do not know where his idea leads.”

Shariputra was aware of the doubt in the minds of the audience, and he himself did not understand [the Buddha’s message] either, so he said to the Buddha:

“O World Honored One, what is the reason that you are extolling the supreme skill in means of the enlightened ones and praising the Truth as extremely profound and hard to comprehend?

“I have never heard you talking like this. Everyone in the audience here has doubts. We hope you will expand on this matter.

“Why do you so diligently praise the Truth [attained by the enlightened ones] as extremely profound and subtle and hard to

understand?”

Then to reiterate his meaning, Shariputra spoke in verse:

Oh Sun of Wisdom, Great Sage, Honored One!

For a long time you have been setting forth this teaching –

You have spoken of attaining such inconceivable things as
power, fearlessness, stable focus, meditative
concentration, and liberation.

The things you have attained at the site of enlightenment no
one can question.

[Now you have said to us:] “My intent is hard to fathom, and
no one is able to ask questions about it.”

Without being asked, you have spoken spontaneously in
praise of the Path you have traveled.

Wisdom is very subtle and wondrous – it is attained by all
the enlightened ones.

But today the stainless worthy ones and those seeking
nirvana have fallen into the net of doubt –

They are wondering why you have spoken this way.

Those seeking solitary enlightenment by understanding the
causal nexus,

The monks and nuns, celestial beings and ocean spirits,
earth spirits and celestial musicians, jealous spirits and
loving spirits and spirits of eternal time and all the rest,
Are looking at each other, full of doubt and hesitation.

We hope that you, the sage among humans, will explain
what you said to us.

You have said that among the believers, I am the foremost.

But right now I am in doubt and cannot comprehend:

Have I reached the ultimate truth, or am I still on the path?

As those to whom your words give life, we join our palms
together and look up to you expectantly,

Hoping you will give forth words of subtle wonder, and
explain for us how things really are.

Those here today, celestial beings and ocean spirits, earth
spirits and humans, are numberless as the sands of
the Ganges,

The bodhisattvas seeking buddhahood number eighty
thousand,

The wheel-turning sage kings of thousands and millions of
lands are present here,

All joining their hands in salute, to signal their respect,
wishing to hear of the path you have completed.

Then the Buddha said to Shariputra: “Stop, stop, say no more.
If I speak of this matter, all the worldly beings, both celestial beings
and humans, will be shocked and plunged into doubt.”

Shariputra again addressed the Buddha:

“World Honored One, we can only hope that you will speak and
explain this to us. Why? In this assembly there are countless
numbers of living beings who have seen the enlightened ones,
whose faculties are bold and sharp, who have wisdom and clear

understanding, who have heard the teachings of the enlightened ones, and who are able to respect them and believe in them.”

Then to reiterate his meaning, Shariputra spoke in verse:

King of the True Teaching, Supremely Honored One,
Please give us the explanation we hope for, and do not
worry.

Among the innumerable beings in this assembly,
There are some who are capable of believing.

Again the Buddha stopped Shariputra: “If I speak of this matter, all the celestial beings, humans, and jealous spirits in the world will be shocked, and those monastics afflicted by pride will fall into a pit.”

Then to reiterate his meaning, the World Honored One spoke in verse:

Stop, stop, do not speak!
My teaching is wondrous and inconceivable –
Those afflicted with pride who hear it will surely not believe
it.

Again Shariputra addressed the Buddha:

“World Honored One, please tell us, please explain for us. In this assembly there are countless of us who have already received teachings from enlightened beings over many lifetimes. People like us should certainly be able to believe what you tell us, so that we can rest easy in this long night and benefit from your teaching.”

Then wishing to reiterate his meaning, the Shariputra spoke in verse:

Unexcelled One, most honored among humans,
We hope you will set forth the Supreme Teaching.
We are mature children of the buddhas –
We hope you will impart your instructions.
In this assembly there is a countless multitude of beings
Who can believe in this teaching. We have already been
taught by the enlightened ones over many lifetimes.
With one mind we all join our palms together in salute,
Wishing to listen to and accept the Buddha's words.
We twelve hundred believers and all the others seeking
enlightenment
Hope that you will impart your teachings for the sake of this
assembly –
If we hear this teaching, we will be overjoyed.

Then the World Honored One said to Shariputra: "You have now diligently made your request three times, so how can I not speak? All of you now listen truly, think well, and pay attention, and I will explain for you."

When the Buddha said this, five thousand of the monks and nuns and laymen and laywomen in the assembly rose from their seats, bowed to the Buddha, and then withdrew. Why did they do this?

This group of people had deep roots of evil deeds and overweening arrogance. They thought they had attained, when in reality they had not attained. They thought they had experienced enlightenment, when in reality they had not experienced

enlightenment. Being misguided like this, they did not want to stay [and hear what the Buddha was about to say.]

The World Honored One kept silent [as they withdrew] and did not try to stop them.

Then the Buddha said to Shariputra: “Now this assembly of ours is free of the peripheral hangers-on and has just the pure and true. It is good that these arrogant people have withdrawn. Now all of you listen well, and I will explain for you.”

Shariputra said: “Let it be so, World Honored One. We are delighted to listen.”

The Buddha told Shariputra:

“This kind of wondrous teaching is explained only at the proper times by the enlightened ones, the ones who have arrived at reality. It is like the udumbara flower, which appears only once in a long time.

“You must believe what the enlightened ones say, Shariputra. Their words are not false. The enlightened ones explain the teachings according to what is right for the situation, and their intent is hard to interpret. Why is this?

“We give forth the teachings by using innumerable expedient means, by using all kinds of causes and conditions, comparisons, metaphors, terminologies. These teachings are not something that can be interpreted through conceptual thought and analysis. Only the enlightened ones can genuinely understand them. Why?

“All the world honored ones, all the enlightened ones, have appeared in the world for the sake of One Great Cause.

“What does this mean, Shariputra, to say that all the world honored ones, all the enlightened ones, have appeared in the world for the sake of One Great Cause?

“All the world honored ones, all the enlightened ones, have appeared in the world in order to enable living beings to open up their enlightened perception and attain purity.

“They have appeared in the world because they wanted to show the enlightened perception of the buddhas to living beings.

“They have appeared in the world because they wanted to enable living beings to awaken to the enlightened perception of the buddhas.

“They have appeared in the world because they wanted to enable living beings to enter upon the path to the enlightened perception of the buddhas.

“This is what it means to say that all the enlightened ones have appeared in the world for the sake of One Great Cause.”

The Buddha told Shariputra:

“All the enlightened ones, all the ones who have arrived at reality, only teach people how to be bodhisattvas, and all that they do is always for one purpose: to show the perception of the buddhas to sentient beings, so that they may awaken to it.

“The ones who have arrived at reality use only the One Journey to Enlightenment in order to teach living beings. There is no other

journey, not a second, not a third.

“This is the way it is with the teachings of all the enlightened ones in all the worlds in the ten directions.

“All the enlightened ones of the past used countless expedient means, all kinds of causes and conditions, comparisons, metaphors, terminologies, in order to set forth the teachings for the sake of living beings – these teachings were all the One Journey to Enlightenment.

“Thus do all living beings, hearing the teachings from enlightened beings, ultimately attain all-knowledge.

“All the enlightened ones of the future will appear in the world, and they too will use countless expedient means, all kinds of causes and conditions, comparisons, metaphors, terminologies, in order to set forth the teachings for the sake of living beings – these teachings will all be the One Journey to Enlightenment.

“Thus do all living beings, hearing the teachings from enlightened beings, ultimately attain all-knowledge.

“All the enlightened ones of the present, in all the countless millions and billions of lands of the ten directions where buddhas are active, benefit living beings and bring them peace and joy. In doing this they use countless expedient means, all kinds of causes and conditions, comparisons, metaphors, terminologies, in order to set forth the teachings for the sake of living beings – these teachings are all the One Journey to Enlightenment.

“Thus do all living beings, hearing the teachings from enlightened beings, ultimately attain all-knowledge.

“Thus do all the enlightened ones only teach people how to be bodhisattvas, in order to show the perception of the enlightened ones to living beings, so that living beings may become enlightened by means of the perception of the enlightened ones, and to enable living beings to enter into the perception of the enlightened ones.

“Shariputra, I too am acting like this.

“I know that living beings have all kinds of desires, that they have attachments deep in their minds. So, according to their basic natures, I use all kinds of causes and conditions, comparisons, metaphors, and terminologies, to explain the teachings to them through the power of skill in means.

“I do this so they can all attain to the One Journey to Enlightenment, and achieve all-knowledge. Shariputra, in all the worlds of the ten directions, there is no second journey, no third journey.

“The enlightened ones appear in this evil world of five corruptions: the corruption of the era, the corruption of affliction, the corruption of living beings, the corruption of opinions, the corruption of life itself.

“The corruption of the era means a time of chaos, when defilement weighs heavily on living beings, when greed and lust form the roots of evil. This is why the buddhas with the power of expedient means have taken the One Journey to Enlightenment and spoken as if it were divided into three.

“Shariputra, if those who claim to be my disciples – whether those worthy ones seeking nirvana, or those seeking solitary

illumination by contemplating interdependent causation – do not know that the enlightened ones, the ones who arrive at reality, only teach the bodhisattva mission, then they are not my disciples, nor are they really worthy ones or solitary illuminates.

“Moreover, if these monks and nuns who think they have already conquered the passions, and are in their last incarnation, and are about to attain final nirvana are unwilling to seek ultimate perfect enlightenment, then you should know that these are people in the grip of arrogance.

“Why is this? Because it would be impossible for a monk or nun who has genuinely become a worthy one not to believe this teaching.

“The only exception would be if they lived in a time when there was no enlightened being currently present in the world, after a enlightened being had passed away. How so?

“After the demise of an enlightened being, [when there is no enlightened being present in that world teaching,] it is difficult to find people who uphold the sutras, read and recite them, and understand their meaning. If they encounter another enlightened being, then they are sure to understand this teaching.

“Shariputra, you must wholeheartedly have faith in the words of the enlightened ones, accept them and uphold them. There is nothing false in the words of the enlightened ones. There are no other teaching vehicles, only the One Journey to Enlightenment.”

Then to reiterate his meaning, the World Honored One spoke in verse:

Here were some five thousand monks, nuns, laymen,
laywomen

Who were arrogant, egotistical, who did not believe.

Not seeing their own errors and the shortcomings in their
discipline,

They clung to their own faults.

In their limited knowledge, as the dregs of the assembly,
they have already departed:

They left because of the awe-inspiring virtue of the
enlightened ones.

Lacking in blessings and virtue, these people are
unprepared to receive this teaching.

Now there are no peripheral people in this assembly, only
the pure and true.

Listen well, Shariputra:

The Truth attained by all the enlightened ones is explained
to living beings

By the boundless power of skill in means.

What the minds of living beings are focused on, the various
paths they travel, and the nature of their desires, the
good and bad deeds of previous lives –

The enlightened ones know all this.

They use various causes and conditions, and explanations
and metaphors and terminologies – the power of
skillful means –

To enable all living beings to feel joy [in the True Teaching].

Sometimes the enlightened ones speak sutras, with verses
and stories,
Stories of the past lives of the buddhas, unprecedented
marvels,
Accounts of causes and conditions, parables, metaphors,
Odes, discourses with questions and answers.
Beings of dull faculties take delight in the lesser teachings –
They are attached to birth and death,
And even if they are in the presence of countless
enlightened beings,
They do not travel the profound wondrous Path.
They are afflicted by their myriad sufferings and thrown into
confusion,
So for them the enlightened ones speak of nirvana [as a
release from suffering].
I devise these expedient means to enable them to enter
upon the wisdom of the enlightened ones.
I have never told you that you will achieve the Buddha Path
–
The reason I had never told you this before was because
the time for telling you had not yet arrived. The right
time is now, and I have decided to explain the Great
Journey.
I adapt to living beings as I set forth this multifaceted
teaching –

It is rooted in the Great Journey, and so I am preaching this
sutra now.

The children of Buddha whose minds are pure, who are
flexible and of sharp faculties,

Have traveled the profound and wondrous path with
countless enlightened beings –

It is for these children of Buddha that I preach this sutra of
the Great Journey.

I predict that these people, in lifetimes to come, will
consummate the Buddha Path,

Because they are focused on Buddha with their deepest
minds and uphold pure discipline.

When people such as these listen to an enlightened being,
great joy permeates them.

The enlightened being knows how their minds work, and so
teaches them the Great Journey.

Whether they are seekers of personal salvation or
bodhisattvas,

When they hear the teachings I put forth, even a single
verse,

They all achieve enlightenment without doubt.

In all the lands of the ten directions where the enlightened
ones are active, there is only the teaching of the One
Journey –

There is no second or third, except for what the enlightened
ones taught as expedient means.

The enlightened ones have used fictional teachings to
influence and guide living beings.

All the enlightened ones came forth into the world in order to
teach the wisdom of the enlightened ones –

All they did was for this one real purpose,
Nothing else was true.

They never intended that the Lesser Journey would bring
salvation to living beings.

The Great Journey is where the enlightened ones abide,
And what they gain here, the adornments of the power of
concentration and wisdom, is what they use to deliver
living beings.

Having experienced the Supreme Path, the everywhere-
equal reality of the Greater Journey,

If I used the Lesser Journey to teach even one person,
This would be stinginess, and such a thing could never be.
If people have faith and take refuge in the enlightened ones,
The enlightened ones will not deceive them.

They have no greed or jealousy and have cut off all the evil
in phenomena –

That is why the enlightened ones are the only ones in the
universe who are free from fear.

We adorn these bodies with the marks of enlightenment,
and its light illuminates the world.

We are honored by countless multitudes, and we explain to
them the Seal of Reality.

You should realize, Shariputra, that we have made a vow –
To enable all beings to be as fearless as we buddhas are.
This vow that I made so long ago, I am now fulfilling,
By teaching all living beings and enabling them to enter
upon the Buddha Path.

When I encounter living beings, I teach them all the Path to
Enlightenment.

Those without wisdom fall into error and confusion and do
not accept the Teaching:

I recognize that such living beings have never cultivated the
roots of goodness

And are firmly attached to the five desires.

Their ignorance and greed produces affliction –

Through the causal nexus of their desires, they fall into the
three evil paths [being born as hell-beings, hungry
ghosts, or animals]

And revolve in the six planes of existence,

Experiencing to the full all sorts of evils and poisons.

From the time they are conceived in the womb, lifetime after
lifetime, these evils are constantly increasing.

People of meager virtue and little merit are assailed by a
multitude of sufferings –

They enter into the thick forest of misguided opinions and
false beliefs.

Deeply attached to false teachings, they doggedly adhere to
them and will not abandon them.

Their arrogance and self-importance mounts,
They flatter and deceive and their minds are not sincere.
They go through thousands and millions of eons, without
ever hearing the term “enlightened one” or the correct
teaching.

People like these are hard to save –

This is why I devise expedient means.

This is why I talk about the path of ending suffering and
teach them about nirvana.

Although I teach about nirvana as peaceful extinction, this is
not true extinction.

All phenomena from the beginning have always had the
characteristic of inherent peaceful extinction, the
characteristic of nirvana.

When the children of Buddha have traveled the path, in
lifetimes to come, they will become enlightened ones.

With the power of skill in means, I expound the teachings of
the Three Journeys –

But all the enlightened ones teach the Path of the One
Journey.

Everyone in this assembly here today must dispel all doubt
and confusion –

In the teachings of all the enlightened ones there is no
difference:

They are all one, and there are not two journeys.

For innumerable ages past, there have been countless
enlightened ones who have become extinct –
Hundreds, thousand, millions of varieties, their number
beyond counting.

Yet all these world-renowned enlightened teachers, using all
kinds of explanations, and the power of countless
expedient means –

They have all set forth the teaching of the One Journey.
They have transformed countless living beings and enabled
them to enter on the Path to Enlightenment.

All these great sages,
Knowing the deepest desires in the minds of the celestial
beings and humans and all the various categories of
living beings in all worlds,
Have used different expedient means to help reveal the
Supreme Truth.

The living beings who have encountered the enlightened
ones of the past,
Who listened to the teaching,
Who acted with generosity, upheld discipline, exercised
patience, focused their energies, practiced meditation
and wisdom, and cultivated merit and wisdom:

All these people have found the Path to Enlightenment.
When all these enlightened ones passed away,
Those people with good and gentle minds, all such living
beings, all found the Path to Enlightenment.

When all these enlightened ones passed away,
Those who made offerings to their relics,
Those who build countless kinds of memorials,
With gold and silver and crystal,
With mother of pearl and agate,
With carnelian, lapis lazuli and pearls,
Who purified them and adorned them,
Who built towers and stone temples and buildings of rare
wood and brick and mortar and tiles,
And those who piled up earth in the fields to make buddha
temples,
And even little children at play who made sand castles for
the buddhas –

All these people found the Path to Enlightenment.

When people made statues and images of the buddhas and
carved their special marks,

All these people found the Path to Enlightenment.

When people made and adorned buddha images with the
seven kinds of precious gems,

With copper, with lead and tin, with iron wood or clay or
lacquer ware –

All these people found the Path to Enlightenment.

When people painted pictures of the buddhas, showing
them with all the marks of their merits,

Whether they made the pictures themselves, or had other
people paint them –

All these people found the Path to Enlightenment.

And even little children at play who drew pictures of the
buddhas with a straw or a stick or a brush or even with
their fingernails –

They all found the Path to Enlightenment.

All these people gradually accumulated merit,

Until they were fully equipped with the mind of great
compassion –

All these people found the Path to Enlightenment.

Teaching only the bodhisattvas, the enlightened ones
brought liberation to countless beings.

In the presence of these memorial towers and temples, in
the presence of these precious images and paintings,

If people reverently offer flowers and incense, banners and
canopies,

If they get people to make music, to play drums and horns
and flutes and stringed instruments and cymbals, and
offer up all this wonderful music to the buddhas,

If they joyously sing songs in praise of the virtues of the
buddhas, even a single note,

They will all find the Path to Enlightenment.

If people whose minds are scattered in confusion offer even
a single flower to an image of a buddha,

Gradually they will come to see innumerable buddhas.

If people bow in homage, or even join their hands together
in salute, or even just raise a single hand, or bow their
heads ever so slightly,

And make such a gesture as an offering to an image of a
buddha,

Gradually they will come to see numberless buddhas.

They will achieve the Supreme Path and deliver countless
living beings.

They will enter nirvana without remainder and be
extinguished like a fire going out when the fuel is
exhausted.

If people whose minds are scattered go into a memorial
tower or a temple and say, "Hail to the Buddha!" –

They will all achieve the Path to Enlightenment.

If people have heard this teaching from the enlightened
ones of the past,

Either while these enlightened ones were in the world, or
after their demise –

They will all achieve the Path to Enlightenment.

There will be countless enlightened ones in the future, and
they will also explain the teaching using skillful
expedients.

They will bring liberation to living beings and lead them into
the immaculate wisdom of the enlightened ones –

Those who hear their teachings will all achieve
enlightenment.

The fundamental vow of the enlightened ones is to enable
all living beings to attain the Path to Enlightenment
that we travel.

Although they may teach countless hundreds and
thousands and millions of methods,

The enlightened ones of the future will in reality be acting on
behalf of the One Journey.

All the enlightened ones, the most honored among humans,
know that phenomena never have had any inherent
nature.

They know that the seed of the enlightened ones arises
from the nexus of interdependent causation,

And thus they teach the One Journey.

This Truth rests in the abode of Truth, and always abides
amid worldly forms.

Once they have come to know this Truth at the site of
enlightenment,

The true teachers explain it with expedient means.

The enlightened ones of the present in all the worlds of the
ten directions

Are served and supported by celestial beings and humans –

They are numberless as the sands of the Ganges.

They appear in the world in order to bring peace to living
beings and to teach this Truth.

Knowing the supreme nirvana,

They employ the power of skillful means,

And though they show all kinds of paths, in reality they are
acting on behalf of the Journey to Enlightenment.

The enlightened ones know the activities of living beings
and what their minds are focused on.

The enlightened ones know their past habits and deeds,
Their desires, their natures, the force of their efforts, and
whether their faculties are sharp or dull.

The enlightened ones use all kinds of causal conditions,
explanations, metaphors, terminology,

And use expedient means according to what is necessary to
teach living beings.

Right now I too am doing this –

In order to bring peace to living beings, I use all sorts of
teachings to communicate the Path to Enlightenment.

Through the power of wisdom, I know the natures and
desires of living beings,

And I use expedient means to explain all sorts of teachings,
to enable them to find joy.

Shariputra, you must know this:

I see with the eyes of the enlightened ones,

I see living beings in the six planes of existence
impoverished and bereft of merit and wisdom,

Entering into the perilous path of birth and death,

Suffering continuously, deeply attached to the five desires,
like dogs chasing their tails.

They shroud themselves with greedy desire,

They blind themselves and see nothing. They do not seek the enlightened ones, with their great power, or the Truth that cuts off suffering.

They immerse themselves deeply in misguided views, and attempt to get rid of suffering through suffering.

Great compassion arises in me for these living beings!

When I was first enlightened, for thirty-seven days I walked around the bodhi tree in contemplation, thinking about these things.

The wisdom that I had attained was subtle and wondrous, unsurpassed.

[I contemplated] living beings with their dull faculties, blinded by their attachments and ignorance,

[Wondering] how can beings such as these be saved?

At that time, all sorts of celestial beings had come to pay their respects and to ask me to turn the Wheel of the Teaching –

The sky gods, the rulers of the heavens, the four heavenly kings who protect the world, the great sovereign deities, accompanied by their retinues of hundreds of thousands of celestial beings.

I thought to myself:

If I just put forward the Journey to Enlightenment,

Living beings sunk in suffering will not be able to believe this teaching.

By rejecting the teaching and not believing in it, they will
sink into the three evil paths.

It would be better for me not to give out the teaching, and
quickly enter into nirvana.

But then I recalled the path of the enlightened ones and the
power of the expedient means they had employed,

And I thought:

I have found the Path now, and I must teach in terms of the
Three Journeys.

As I was thinking this, all the enlightened ones of the worlds
of the ten directions appeared and gave me
encouragement with their holy voices:

“Well done, Shakyamuni!” [they declared.]

“As supreme teacher and guide [for this time and place],
having attained this unsurpassed Truth,

You must follow the example of all the enlightened ones and
use the power of expedient means –

For the sake of the various kinds of living beings, they make
the distinction and teach in terms of the Three
Journeys.

Those lacking in wisdom enjoy the lesser teachings and do
not believe that they can become enlightened.

This is why we use expedient means and make distinctions
when teaching of the results of practice.

This is why, though we speak of the Three Journeys, [in
reality], we only teach people how to be bodhisattvas.”

You must realize, Shariputra, that when I heard the pure
wondrous voice of these sage teachers,

I joyously called out “Hail to the Buddhas!”

Then I had this thought:

“I have appeared in a defiled, wicked world.

I must act according to what the buddhas have said.”

Having reflected on this, I immediately set out for [the
nearby city of] Varanasi [to begin teaching].

The inherent nirvanic quality in all phenomena cannot be
communicated in words,

So I used the power of expedient means to explain it to the
five monks [who had accompanied me while I was a
seeker].

This is called “turning the Wheel of the Teaching.”

So I used various different terms: “nirvana,” “arhat,”
“dharma,” “sangha” –

Just as [other enlightened ones] since ancient times

Had extolled the teaching of nirvana

And a permanent end to the sufferings of birth and death,

I taught this way too.

Shariputra, you must realize this:

I have seen all the children of the buddhas

Intent on seeking the path of the buddhas,

In countless thousands and millions,

All coming reverently to where the buddhas have been,

All listening to the enlightened ones,
All hearing the teachings that the enlightened ones have
spoken as expedient means.

I thought this:

“The reason the ones who arrive at reality come forth
Is to explain the wisdom of the enlightened ones.

The time is now.”

Shariputra, you must realize this:

People of dull faculties and little wisdom, arrogant ones
attached to forms,

Cannot believe in this teaching.

Now I am joyful and fearless in the presence of the
bodhisattvas,

So right now I put aside expedient means

And just speak of the Supreme Path.

When bodhisattvas hear this teaching, the net of doubt is
totally removed.

The twelve hundred seekers of personal salvation [in this
assembly] will also become buddhas.

The way in which all the enlightened ones of past, present,
and future have explained the Teaching –

Today I too act as they did and put forward the Teaching in
which there are no distinctions [into different journeys].

The enlightened ones appear in the world, but meeting them
has always been difficult.

It is also difficult to get to hear this Teaching, even in
countless eons,
And it is ever more difficult to find people who are able to
listen to this Teaching.
It is like the udambara flower – loved and enjoyed by all,
But it rarely blooms, perhaps only once in many ages.
Those who hear this Teaching and joyously praise it, even
with a single word
Have already served all the enlightened ones of past,
present, and future.
These people are very rare, rarer even than the flower that
blooms once in a thousand years.
Let none of you have doubts –
I am the king of all the teachings,
And I am telling all of you in this assembly:
With the Path of the One Journey, I am teaching the
bodhisattvas,
Not the seekers of personal salvation.
All of you, Shariputra, both literalist disciples and
bodhisattvas,
Must recognize that this Wondrous Truth is the essential
secret of all the buddhas.
In the evil world of the five corruptions, people only want to
be attached to their desires –
People like these will never seek the Path to Enlightenment.

Evil people in future generations who hear that the Buddha
spoke of the One Journey

Will be confused and will not believe it.

They will reject the Teaching and fall into evil paths.

Those who feel shame and who purify themselves will
become intent on seeking the Path to Enlightenment,

And it is for people such as these that we should put forth
the Path of the One Journey on a broad scale.

Shariputra, you must realize this:

The Teaching of all the enlightened ones is like this.

They explain the truth according to what is right [for the
time, place, and people]

Using thousands and millions of skillful expedients.

Those who have not persevered in their studies cannot
understand this,

But those like you already know –

The buddhas, the teachers of the worlds, use expedient
means according to what is appropriate for the
occasion.

Let there be no more doubts or confusion,

Let your minds be filled with great joy,

Knowing you yourselves will become enlightened!

Chapter 3: Metaphor

At that time, Shariputra leapt up with joy, joined his palms together in salute, looked up at the Buddha and said:

“As I hear this teaching from you today, World Honored One, my heart is full of enthusiasm, and I am experiencing something I have never experienced before. Why is this?

“Previously when I heard such teachings from you, I saw you give predictions of enlightenment to the bodhisattvas and tell them they would become buddhas. Listeners like me [who are not bodhisattvas] did not think we would participate in such things, and we felt very sorry for ourselves, imagining that we had lost out on the limitless knowledge and perception of the ones who arrive at reality.

“O World Honored One, I have always dwelt in solitude in the mountain forests and, whether I was sitting or walking, I always had this thought:

“ ‘Those like me are immersed in the true nature of phenomena the same [as the bodhisattvas], so why does the Buddha see fit to offer us salvation through the Lesser Journey? It must be our own fault, not the fault of the World Honored One.

“ ‘Why so? If we had waited until he taught the causal basis for achieving ultimate perfect enlightenment, we would have attained liberation through the Great Journey. But we did not understand that he was giving us the Teaching using expedient means, according to what suited us. When we first heard the Teaching of the Buddha, we

immediately believed it and accepted it, thinking that we had attained realization.'

"O World Honored One, for a long time now I have blamed myself night and day. But now I have heard from you what I never heard before and never experienced before, and this has cut off all my doubts and my regrets. My body and mind feel tranquil, and I am happy and at peace.

"Today I have realized at last that I really am a child of the buddhas, that I have been born from the mouth of the buddhas, that I have been born through the Teaching of Reality, that I have a share in the Teaching of the Enlightened Ones."

Then, wishing to reiterate this idea, Shariputra spoke a verse:

As I hear this Teaching,
I experience what I have never experienced before.
My heart is filled with great joy –
The net of doubts is totally removed.
In the past I reacted naïvely to the Buddha's Teaching,
But I have not lost out on the Great Journey.
The sound of the Buddha's voice is most rare –
It can dispel the afflictions of living beings.
I have lived in the mountain valleys, under the trees of the
forest.
Whether sitting or walking, I was always thinking about this
matter,
Lamenting and blaming myself –

Why was I deceiving myself?

I and the others like me are also children of the buddhas,

We too enter into the stainless Teaching,

[I was wrong when I imagined that] we would not be able to
set forth on the Supreme Path.

[The buddhas] have their golden color and their thirty-two
special marks,

Their ten powers ^[7] and their liberations,

And we all share in a single reality –

[But I wrongly imagined that] people like me cannot attain
these things.

[The buddhas] have their eighty wondrous virtues, and their
eighteen unique qualities –

[But I wrongly imagined that] we had already lost out on all
these merits.

As I traveled on alone, I saw the Buddha amid a great
multitude,

His reputation known throughout the land, as he brought
benefits to living beings on a broad scale.

But I thought I had lost this advantage – I was cheating
myself, lying to myself.

Day and night I thought about such things,

Wanting to ask the World Honored One if I had lost my
chance or not.

I always saw the World Honored One praising the
 bodhisattvas,
And I pondered these things every day and every night.
Today I have heard the Buddha's voice
Giving forth the teaching according to what is appropriate –
Immaculate, inconceivable, enabling the whole assembly to
 reach the site of enlightenment.
I have been attached to misguided views,
I have acted as a teacher to the priests.
The World Honored One knew my mentality, and to uproot
 my misguided ideas, he taught me about nirvana.
I got rid of all my misguided views and experienced the
 teaching of emptiness.
At that time, in my mind, I thought I had arrived at nirvana –
But now today I realize that this was not genuine nirvana.
When I attain buddhahood,
When I have all the characteristics of enlightenment,
When celestial beings and humans and demons and ocean
 spirits and earth spirits offer their respects –
Only then can it be called eternal complete nirvana.
In today's great assembly, the Buddha has said that we will
 become enlightened beings.
As I heard this teaching, my doubts and regrets were all
 eliminated.

When I first heard what the Buddha said, in my mind I was
startled and filled with doubts –

I thought: “Isn’t this a demon of delusion masquerading as
the Buddha and confusing my mind?”

The Buddha taught using all sorts of methods, metaphors
and analogies, and eloquent words,

His mind was peaceful as the ocean,

And as I listened to him, the net of doubt was broken.

The Buddha said that in the worlds of the past,

Countless enlightened ones in the state of nirvana,

Dwelling peacefully in their expedient means,

All expounded This Teaching too.

And the enlightened ones of the present and the future, their
number beyond counting,

All expound this teaching using expedient means as well.

Here in this present world,

From his birth, to his leaving home, to his enlightenment, to
his turning the Wheel of the Teaching –

The World Honored One also has taught by using expedient
means.

The World Honored One teaches the Path of Reality –

The demons of delusion do not have anything like this.

Therefore I know for sure that this is not a demon
masquerading as the Buddha.

It was only because I fell into the net of doubts that I thought
this might be the work of demons.

Hearing the gentle, mellow voice of the Buddha

Giving forth a pure teaching that is so profound, so far-
reaching, so subtle, so wondrous,

My doubts and regrets are forever ended,

And I abide at peace in genuine wisdom.

I will surely become an enlightened one and be honored by
celestial beings and humans,

Turning the Wheel of the Supreme Teaching and teaching
the bodhisattvas.

Then the Buddha told Shariputra:

“Here I am now, in the midst of this great assembly of celestial
beings and humans, giving you the Teaching.

“In the past, [over the eons,] in the presence of two billion
enlightened ones, for the sake of the Supreme Path, I have always
been teaching you, and you in your eternal night have been following
me and trying to learn from me.

“I used skillful means to influence and guide you, and so you
have been born in the midst of my teachings.

“Shariputra, in the past I taught you to be intent on the Path to
Enlightenment, but until now you have always forgotten this, thinking
that you had already reached nirvana.

“Now I still want to enable you to remember the Path traveled
according to our fundamental vow, and to teach this sutra of the

Great Journey to all these people who are seeking individual salvation. It is called the *Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Truth* , and it teaches the truth of the bodhisattvas, who are protected by the enlightened ones.

“Shariputra, in lifetimes yet to come, over countless, boundless, inconceivable eons, you will serve many thousands and millions of enlightened ones. You will faithfully uphold the True Teaching and fulfill the Path traveled by the bodhisattvas.

“You will become a buddha, and you will be called Flower Light, one who has arrived at reality, one worthy of being served, possessed of correct all-encompassing knowledge and fully equipped with enlightened action, one who has gone beyond worldly concerns, a liberated one, an unsurpassed being, a master teacher and guide, the teacher of celestial beings and humans, a buddha, a world honored one.

“Your land will be called Undefined, and its ground will be level and even, adorned with purity, peaceful, prosperous, and full of joy, the glory of celestial beings and humans. The ground will be made of crystal, and it will have a network of eight great thoroughfares marked off with golden boundaries, with seven rows of jewel trees beside them, always in bloom.

“As one who has arrived at reality, the Buddha Flower Light will also use the expedient of the Three Journeys to teach and transform living beings.

“Shariputra, when that enlightened one comes forth in the world, though it will not be a world of evil, because of his

fundamental vow, he will give forth the teaching of the Three Journeys.

“His era will be named ‘Adorned with Great Jewels.’ Why will the era be named ‘Adorned with Great Jewels’? In that world bodhisattvas will be considered great jewels. There will be innumerable bodhisattvas, inconceivably many bodhisattvas, so many that no metaphor would be adequate, so many that their number will be unknowable, except to those with the power of the wisdom of the buddhas.

“Whenever these bodhisattvas want to walk somewhere, jewel flowers will support their feet. These bodhisattvas will not be those who have first developed the aspiration for enlightenment, but rather those who have planted the roots of virtue long ago. They will have practiced pure conduct in the company of countless thousands and millions of buddhas and will have been acclaimed by the buddhas forever.

“These bodhisattvas will have always been cultivating the wisdom of the buddhas, and they will possess great spiritual powers and know the methods of all the teachings. They will be straightforward by nature, without falsity, with an intent that is strong and firm. Such bodhisattvas as these will fill the land of the Buddha Flower Light.

“Shariputra, the lifespan of the Buddha Flower Light will be twelve lesser eons, not including the time he spent as a prince before becoming enlightened. The people of his land will have lifespans of eight lesser eons.

“When the Buddha Flower Light has lived twelve lesser eons, he will give a prediction of ultimate complete enlightenment for the bodhisattva Full of Strength.

“He will tell his disciples: ‘This bodhisattva Full of Strength will be the next one to become a buddha. He will be called Traveling in Peace on Flower Feet, the one who has arrived at reality, the one who has conquered desires, the perfectly enlightened one. His buddha-land will be like this one.’

“Shariputra, after the demise of the Buddha Flower Light, the Correct Teaching will survive in the world for thirty-two lesser eons, and an era when there is only a semblance of the Teaching will follow and also last for thirty-two lesser eons.”

Then to reiterate his meaning, the World Honored One spoke in verse:

In a lifetime to come, Shariputra,
You will become a buddha honored for all-encompassing
wisdom.
Your name will be Flower Light, and you will bring salvation
to countless beings.
Having served countless enlightened ones, and fulfilled the
practice of the bodhisattvas,
Possessed of the ten powers and all the other virtues of a
buddha,
You will realize the Supreme Path.
After you have traversed countless eons, your era then will
be named Adorned with Great Jewels.

Your land will be called Undeiled and be clear and pure and
free from filth.

The ground will be made of crystal, and golden cords will
mark out the thoroughfares,

Trees made of the seven jewels will glitter with all colors,
Always blooming with flowers and fruits.

The bodhisattvas of that land will always be firm in their
intent –

They will possess in ample measure all the perfections of
spiritual powers.

These great beings will be taught by the Buddha Flower
Light.

When that buddha was a young prince, he left home to
consummate the Path to Enlightenment.

The Buddha Flower Light will live in his world over a lifespan
of twelve eons.

The people of his land will enjoy lifespans of eight eons.

After the demise of the Buddha Flower Light, the Correct
Teaching will survive in his world for thirty-two eons,
Bringing salvation on a wide scale to a multitude of living
beings.

After the correct teaching has dwindled away and come to
an end,

There will be a period when only the semblance of the
Teaching remains, and this will last thirty-two eons.

The relics of the enlightened ones will be widely scattered –

Celestial beings and humans everywhere will make offerings to them.

Such will be the deeds of the Buddha Flower Light,
A sage honored among humans, a matchless paragon –
He will be your future incarnation, and you should be glad
and rejoice!

Then the whole assembly – monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, celestial beings and ocean spirits, earth spirits and celestial musicians, jealous spirits and loving spirits and spirits of eternal time and so on – saw Shariputra in the presence of the Buddha receiving this prediction of ultimate perfect enlightenment, and their minds were filled with great joy, and they were exultant.

They all took off the garments they were wearing and offered them to the Buddha. The Lord of the Gods, and the Kings of the Sky Gods and the countless other divine beings also took their wondrous celestial garments and their glorious heavenly flowers and offered them to the Buddha.

These celestial garments hovered in midair, revolving on their own, and all sorts of celestial musicians played all at once, so their music filled the air and proclaimed this: “In the past [at the start of his teaching activity] the Buddha turned the Wheel of the Teaching at Varanasi, and now at last he is turning the Wheel of the Supreme Teaching.”

Then, wanting to reiterate their message, the divine beings spoke a verse:

In the past at Varanasi,

The Buddha turned the Wheel of the Teaching of the Four
Truths. [8]

He made distinctions and explained that all phenomena
Are born and perish as combinations of the five aggregates.
[9]

Today the Buddha turns the wheel of the most wondrous
supreme teaching –

This teaching is most profound and abstruse –

Few are able to believe it.

Over a long time, we have heard the World Honored One
teach many times,

But we have never heard this before, this profound,
wondrous, supreme teaching.

The World Honored One has set forth this teaching,

And we are all filled with joy.

The wise Shariputra has today received the Buddha's
prediction that he will become enlightened.

It is this way for us too – we are sure to become
enlightened!

In all worlds, the supremely honored, unsurpassable path to
enlightenment is inconceivable.

It is explained using expedient means according to what is
right for the situation.

All our meritorious deeds, whether in this lifetime or past
lifetimes,

All the merit of seeing the buddhas –

We dedicate it all to the Path to Enlightenment!

Then Shariputra said to the Buddha: “O World Honored One, now I have no more doubts or regrets, having personally received your prediction that I will achieve ultimate perfect enlightenment.

“There are twelve hundred people here with free minds. In the past, when they were in the stage of learning, the Buddha often taught them saying, ‘My teaching can detach you from birth, old age, sickness, and death, and take you to final nirvana.’

“These people – both those in the stage of learning, and those beyond the stage of learning – thought that being detached from self-centered views and from dualistic views of existence and nonexistence meant achieving nirvana. Now here, in the presence of the World Honored One, they have heard what they never heard before, and all of them have fallen into doubt and confusion.

“How splendid it would be, O World Honored One, if you were to explain to the assembly the reasons [for what you have taught us today] and enable them to leave behind their doubts.”

The Buddha said to Shariputra: “Did I not say earlier that the enlightened ones explain the Teaching using all sorts of causes and conditions, metaphors and explanations, all sorts of terminology, all sorts of expedient means, all for the sake of ultimate perfect enlightenment? This is because all the explanations the enlightened ones give are to teach people how to be bodhisattvas.

“So then, Shariputra, today I shall use another metaphoric explanation to further elucidate this truth. All those who have any

intelligence should be able to understand by means of this metaphor.

“Once upon a time, in a town in a certain country, there was a wealthy man, advanced in years, who possessed immeasurable riches. He owned many fields and houses and had all sorts of people serving him.

“His own manor house was very large, but it only had a single door. Perhaps as many as five hundred people lived in the manor house. The halls and rooms of the manor house were decayed and decrepit, the walls were almost tumbling down, the pillars and footings had rotted out, and the roof beams were dangerously askew.

“Suddenly a fire started on all sides, surrounding the manor house, burning the surrounding buildings. The children of the wealthy man were inside the manor house – there were perhaps ten or twenty or even thirty children. The wealthy man saw the conflagration closing in from all sides, and was very alarmed.

“This is what he thought: ‘Although I myself might escape safely through this burning gate, my children are all absorbed in their games inside the burning house, totally unaware [of the imminent peril] and unafraid. The fire is coming toward them, threatening them with pain and suffering, but their minds are oblivious of the peril, and they have no idea they should be trying to escape.’

“First he thought: ‘I am physically strong. I should wrap them in my cloak, and perhaps carry them on a bench, and take them out of the house.’

“But then he thought: ‘This house has only one way out, and it is quite narrow. My children are still young and heedless. They are engrossed in their play and may fall and be burnt by the flames. I must explain to them this fearful thing that is happening. I must tell them that the house is on fire and that we must flee right now, or else the fire will burn us up.’

“With this in mind, the wealthy man told his children, ‘Quick, you must get out of the house!’

“Though their father spoke to them kindly, trying to coax them to leave the house, the children were enjoying their games and would not listen to what he was saying. They had absolutely no intention of leaving the house. Indeed, they did not know what fire was, or what a house was, or what danger was. They just kept running around playing. They did look at their father, but that was all.

“Then the wealthy man thought: ‘The house is already being consumed by this great fire, and if my children and I do not get out in time, we are sure to be incinerated. I have to devise some means to enable my children to escape this disaster.’

“The father knew the mentality of his children, and he knew that they all had their own favorite toys that were sure to delight them. So he said to them: ‘The toys you like are special and hard to come by. If you do not take them now, you will be sorry later. Right now outside the door there are sheep-carts and deer-carts and ox-carts, there for you to play with and enjoy. You better go outside quickly, out of this burning house, and I will give you whichever carts you want.’

“Hearing what their father said about these special toys, which were just what they wanted, the children’s minds became alert, and pushing and shoving past each other, they all ran out the door, hurrying out of the burning house.

“At that point, seeing that all his children had escaped to safety and were sitting in the open at the crossroads outside with nothing hemming them in, the wealthy man felt relieved and overjoyed.

“Now the children said to their father: ‘Please give us those toys you promised us before, those toys that we want, the sheep-carts and deer-carts and ox-carts.’

“[Instead of the simple carts he had promised], the wealthy man gave each of his children a grand carriage.

“These carriages were broad and high and decorated with jewels, with railings all around, and jewels hanging from all sides, and canopies on top also decorated with various jewels, and draped with jeweled nets, and hung with garlands of flowers, and upholstered with layers of cushions and scarlet pillows. Each carriage was drawn by a pure white ox with a powerful body and great strength, an ox which moved along smoothly, as fast as the wind. Each carriage also had an accompanying retinue of servants to attend to it and guard it.

“What was the reason for all this?

“The wealthy man had riches beyond measure, and all his storehouses were overflowing, and he thought like this:

“ ‘My wealth is inexhaustible, and I cannot give my children low-quality carts. All these children are my own offspring, and I love

them all equally. I have all these countless jeweled carriages, and I must bestow them on all my children equitably, making no distinctions among them. Why? With all my possessions, I could equip the whole country without running short, so how can I be stingy with my own children?’

“Then the wealthy man’s children all climbed up into the carriages, and experienced something they had never experienced before, which was not what they had originally expected.

“Tell me, Shariputra, in your opinion, when this wealthy man gave his children these precious carriages, the same for all, was he acting falsely?”

“No, World Honored One, he was not. What happened was that this wealthy man acted to enable his children to escape the fire and preserve their lives – this was not acting falsely. Why? They preserved their lives, and they got something they could enjoy, and what’s more, with his skillful expedient, their father rescued them from the burning house.

“As for the wealthy man not giving the children the lesser carts, this was not acting falsely. Why? The wealthy man’s intent was to use expedient means to enable them to escape from the burning house. This is why there was no falsehood here – all the more so because the wealthy man knew he had riches beyond measure and wanted to benefit his children by giving them the great carriages.”

The Buddha told Shariputra, “Very good, very good! It is as you say, Shariputra. The ones who arrive at reality are acting like [the wealthy man in the story].

“They act as the fathers to all the world. They put an end to the fear, frailty, anxiety, ignorance, and darkness of living beings. They end it forever, totally. They achieve unbounded wisdom and perception, power, fearlessness, great spiritual power and the power of wisdom. They are fully equipped with skill in means, with the perfection of wisdom, with great mercy and compassion.

“The ones who arrive at reality are tireless, and always work for the good, benefiting all living beings. They are born [into the mundane world,] into the old rotten burning house, in order to deliver living beings from the fires of birth, old age, sickness, and death, from sorrow, affliction, ignorance, and darkness, and from the three poisons of greed, anger, and delusion.

“The ones who arrive at reality teach and transform living beings and enable them to reach ultimate complete enlightenment. They see people burning up with birth, old age, sickness, and death, sorrow, affliction. They see people becoming subject to all sorts of suffering due to their desires and their craving for wealth and profit.

“Because of their cravings and attachments and frantic seeking, people experience suffering in their present lives, and later on they experience suffering in hell, as animals, and as hungry ghosts. If they are born in heaven, or in the human realm, they experience all sorts of suffering, like being poor and destitute, or being separated from the ones they love, or being together with the ones they hate.

“People fall into the midst of these sufferings, yet they are happy and play along, unaware of their situation, not alarmed by it. They do not feel any aversion to it, and they do not seek to escape

from it. They run back and forth in this burning house of the three realms_ [\[10\]](#)_and although they encounter great sufferings, they do not think of it as a problem.

“Shariputra, when the enlightened ones see all this, they think to themselves: ‘We are the parents of these living beings. We must rescue them from their pain and suffering. We must grant them the infinite wisdom and bliss of the enlightened ones, and enable them to enjoy it freely.’

“The ones who have arrived at reality also think this: ‘If we extol the knowledge and perception of the ones who have arrived at reality, their power and their fearlessness, using only our spiritual powers and wisdom, and without using expedient means, then these living beings will not be able to attain liberation. Why not? These living beings have not avoided birth, old age, sickness, and death, sorrow and suffering. They are being incinerated in the burning house of the three realms. How could they possibly be able to understand the wisdom of the enlightened ones?’

“Shariputra, the ones who have arrived at reality are like the wealthy man in the story. Though he was strong, he could not use sheer strength [to rescue his children]. His only option was to save his children from disaster in the burning house by using a careful expedient. Only after that could he give them the grand jeweled carriages.

“It is also this way for the ones who have arrived at reality. They have power, they are fearless, but they cannot use this [by itself to save living beings]. All they can do is use wisdom and skill in means.

“To rescue living beings from the burning house of the three realms, they teach the Three Journeys – the journey for those seeking personal salvation, the journey for those seeking solitary illumination, and the journey to buddhahood.

“They speak to living beings like this: ‘You must not stay in the burning house. You must not stay addicted to the crude sensations of color, sound, scent, taste, and touch. If you crave them and become attached to them and fall in love with them, you will get burned. Hurry up and come out of the three realms, and you will find the Three Journeys – the journey for those seeking personal salvation, the journey for those seeking solitary illumination, and the journey to buddhahood. I guarantee you this, and I will never be false to you. All you have to do is cultivate yourselves diligently and make progress.’

“Using such expedient means to entice living beings to get moving, the ones who have arrived at reality also tell them this: ‘You all should understand that the methods of these three journeys are all approved by the sages, are free and unbound, have no dependencies or seeking. Take advantage of these three journeys, and you will enjoy the bliss of undefiled faculties, power, awakening, enlightenment, stable concentration, liberation, and meditative absorption, and thereby attain infinite peace and happiness.’

“Shariputra, suppose there are people who have the nature of wisdom within them, who hear the teaching from the enlightened ones and accept and believe it, who work diligently to make spiritual progress, wanting to escape from the three realms and attain nirvana for themselves – this is called the journey of those who seek

personal salvation. They are like the children in the story who came out of the burning house because they were looking for the carts pulled by sheep.

“Suppose there are people who hear the teaching from the enlightened ones and accept and believe it, who work diligently to make spiritual progress, wanting to find natural wisdom, who enjoy solitude and value quiescence, who have a deep knowledge of the interdependent causation of all phenomena – this is called the journey of the solitary illuminates. They are like the children in the story who came out of the burning house because they were looking for the carts pulled by deer.

“Suppose there are people who hear the teaching from the enlightened ones and accept and believe it, who work diligently to make spiritual progress, wanting to find omniscience, enlightened wisdom, the wisdom that is spontaneously so, the wisdom that has no teacher, the knowledge and perception of the ones who arrive at reality, the power, the fearlessness – people who intend to bring peace and joy to countless numbers of living beings, to benefit celestial beings and humans, to bring liberation to all beings – this is called the Great Journey. Because this is the journey sought by the bodhisattvas, they are called great beings. They are like the children in the story who came out of the burning house because they were looking for the carts pulled by oxen.

“Shariputra, when that wealthy man in the story saw his children reach safety and get out of the burning house to a place where they were in no danger, he thought to himself of his boundless riches, and he gave all his children grand carriages.

“The ones who arrive at reality are also like this. They act as parents to all living beings. When they see countless millions and billions of living beings escape from the sufferings of the three realms by means of the teachings of the enlightened ones, when they see them out of the terrible danger, the ones who arrive at reality think this: ‘We have infinite boundless wisdom, power, fearlessness – all the treasures of the teaching of enlightenment. These living beings are all our children, and we will give them all the Great Journey. We will not let anyone achieve nirvana alone – we will bring salvation to them all with the nirvana of the ones who have arrived at reality.’

“Thus it is, that when living beings are liberated from the three realms, they are all provided with the bliss of the concentration and liberation of all the enlightened ones. They all share this defining characteristic, they are all acclaimed by the sages, they all give rise to the pure wondrous supreme bliss.

“Shariputra, the wealthy man in the story was not guilty of any falsehood when at first he talked of the three kinds of carts to lure his children out of the burning house, and then afterwards gave them all magnificent carriages, adorned with precious things, supremely safe and secure.

“The same is true of the ones who arrive at reality. They are not guilty of any falsehood when they talk at first of the Three Journeys in order to guide living beings, and afterwards just bring them liberation through the Great Journey.

“Why? The ones who arrive at reality have an infinite treasury of wisdom, power, and fearlessness, and they could give all living

beings the teaching of the Great Journey, but not all living beings are capable of accepting it. Wishing to reiterate his meaning, the Buddha spoke a verse:

Suppose there was a wealthy man with a great mansion,
But his mansion was old and decrepit,
With its halls and rooms grand but precarious,
Its pillars rotted through, its rafters leaning askew,
Its foundation on the verge of ruin,
Its walls cracked and dilapidated, with the plaster falling off,
Its roof full of holes, and the eaves crumbling.
The fence surrounding the mansion was all broken down,
With rubbish piled up everywhere.
Five hundred people were living in this mansion.
It was the haunt of all sorts of birds of prey and scavengers,
Overrun with vipers and vermin and all sorts of foul
creatures.
It stank of feces and urine and was overflowing with filth.
It was swarming with maggots and crawling insects.
Wolves and jackals snapped at each other as they trampled
through the filth,
Tearing apart the dead bodies and scattering the carcasses.
Packs of dogs seized what they could, crazed with hunger,
looking everywhere for food,
Fighting each other, snarling and biting.

What a frightful place the mansion was, having become like
this!

There were ghosts and monsters everywhere, ghouls and
evil demons

Feeding on human flesh.

Poisonous insects, evil birds and beasts, procreating, giving
birth,

Hiding and defending their offspring, as ghouls rushed
forward to seize them and devour them.

When they had eaten their fill, their malevolent hearts
burned more fiercely –

The noise of their fighting and wrangling was utterly
horrifying.

Grotesque dwarfish demons crouched in the dirt, leaping up
from time to time,

Moving restlessly back and forth,

Doing whatever they pleased to amuse themselves –

Sometimes they would grab a dog by its legs and beat it
senseless,

Or stomp on its neck, tormenting the dog for their own
pleasure.

There were also large tall demons, naked, dark, emaciated,

Who perpetually haunted the mansion,

Crying out with hideous voice demanding to be fed.

There were other demons with throats as narrow as
needles,

And other demons with heads as huge as oxen,
Some eating human flesh, others devouring dogs,
With tangled hair, cruel and ferocious, driven by hunger and
thirst,

Running around howling.

Ghouls and hungry ghosts and evil birds and beasts
Pressed in hungrily from all sides, looking in through the
windows.

All these dangers plagued the mansion, all these endless
terrors!

This rotting old mansion belonged to a man –

The man had gone outside and was nearby.

Before long, a fire suddenly broke out around the house –

All at once on all sides the flames blazed up. The beams
and rafters shattered with an explosive sound,

Broke apart and came tumbling down and the walls
collapsed.

The demons and ghosts wailed and moaned.

The birds of prey and the dwarfish demons were panic-
stricken, unable to escape.

The evil beasts and poisonous vermin hid in their holes and
burrows, along with the flesh-eating demons.

Devoid of merit as they were, all these beings were
threatened by the flames –

They began to rip each other apart, to drink each other's
blood, to eat each other's flesh.

The scavengers had already died, and the larger evil
predators fought each other to devour them.

Noxious smoke billowed up and closed in on all sides.

Scorched by the flames, the vermin and poisonous vipers
came rushing out of their holes,

And the dwarf demons grabbed them and gobbled them up.

All the hungry ghosts, with their heads on fire, famished,
parched, crazed by the heat,

Ran in all directions in terror.

This was the condition the mansion was in –

Terrifying, poisonous, on fire, in the grip of a multitude of
evils.

Then it was that the master of the house, standing outside
the gate, heard someone say:

“Your children were playing before, and then went into the
mansion.

Young and ignorant as they are, they are having a good
time absorbed in their fun.”

When the master of the house heard this,

He became alarmed and went into the burning house

To rescue the children, so that they would not be burned up.

He told the children that they were threatened by a
multitude of dangers.

He told them of the evil demons and the poisonous vermin
and the spreading conflagration.

He told them of the many kinds of pain that were
approaching one after another, and would continue
without end –

Poisonous snakes and vipers,
Ghouls and demons,
Predatory animals and birds,
Noxious vermin –

All in a frenzy of hunger and thirst.

He told them that all these were things to be feared –

He told them that this was a place of pain and suffering, and
now it was on fire.

But the children had no understanding,
And though they heard their father's warning,
They were still wrapped up in their amusements and kept
right on playing.

Then the master of the house thought this:

“For my children to act like this makes me even more
anxious.

There is not a single thing to enjoy in this house,
But my children are immersed in their play.

They do not register what I am telling them –
They will be injured by the fire.”

So he immediately thought what to do, and devised an expedient.

He told the children:

“I have all sorts of playthings for you, wondrous jeweled carts,

Sheep carts and deer carts and ox carts.

They are waiting outside for you right now – come out and get them.

We have made these carts just for you, according to what you enjoy,

And you can play with them.”

When the children heard what their father said about these carts,

They immediately ran out of the house, onto the open ground,

And escaped from danger. Seeing that his children had all managed to get out of the burning house,

And were standing at the crossroads,

The wealthy man sat down on a lion seat and rejoiced:

“How happy I am now!

These children I raised with such difficulty,

These naïve little ones without understanding,

Were in danger inside the house, threatened on all sides

By all sorts of poisonous vermin, by frightful demons and monsters,

By the fierce flames of a great conflagration,
Yet they were besotted by the games they were playing.
Now I have rescued them, and enabled them to escape
from danger.

That's why I say to you all, now I am happy."

Then the children, seeing their father sitting there
peacefully,

All went to him and said:

"Please give us the three kinds of precious carts
Which you promised us before,
When you told us that if we came out of the house,
You would give us whichever of the three kinds of carts we
wanted.

Now is the time: please give them to us."

The master of the house was very rich –

He had many storehouses filled with silver and gold and
crystal and precious stones and many valuables.

He had made his children great carriages,

Lavishly decorated, with railings all around them,

And bells hanging from their sides.

They were crisscrossed with golden ropes,

Networks of pearls extended over them.

They were draped all over with garlands of golden flowers,

And covered with multicolored decorations.

They were upholstered with soft silk cushions,

And roofed with priceless fabrics of pure white.
Harnessed to these carriages
Were great white oxen, fine and strong.
A multitude of attendants stood by to accompany the
carriages and guard them.
The wealthy man gave all his children these wondrous
carriages,
And at that moment all his children rejoiced.
They mounted the jeweled carriages,
And traveled throughout the land,
Having a good time, feeling happy,
Free and independent and unobstructed.
The Buddha tells Shariputra:
“I am like this too –
Honored among the sages, father to the world,
All living beings are my children.
They are deeply attached to worldly pleasures,
And bereft of the mind of wisdom.
There is no safety in the three realms –
The three realms are like a house on fire,
Filled with a mass of sufferings,
Truly to be feared,
Burning endlessly.
The ones who have arrived at reality have already left

The burning house of the three realms,
And dwell at ease and in peace.
They are in a safe place, in the forests and fields.
But now these three realms are all in my charge,
And the living beings within them are all my children.
Now in this place they are afflicted by so many troubles –
Only I can save them and protect them.
Though I have taught them many times,
They do not accept these teachings,
Because they are defiled by their desires,
Deeply imbued with cravings and attachments.
Therefore I make use of expedient means
And teach them of the Three Journeys,
So that all these living beings may come to know the
 sufferings of the three realms.
I show the way and explain the path that leads out of the
 mundane world.
If these children of mine make up their minds,
They already possess the three forms of insight [\[11\]](#)
And the six penetrating powers. [\[12\]](#)
They can become illuminated through understanding
 interdependent causation,
And they can become bodhisattvas who never fall back.
I tell you, Shariputra, that for the sake of living beings

I use these metaphoric teachings to teach the One Journey
to Enlightenment.

If you all can believe and accept these words,
All of you are sure to consummate the Path to Buddhahood.

This Journey is very subtle –

It is pure above all, unsurpassed in any world,

It is what the enlightened ones joyously attest to,

It is what all living beings should praise and serve and give
homage to.

There are countless forms of empowerment, liberation,
concentration, wisdom,

And all the other phenomena of enlightenment.

If [living beings] make this journey, it will enable them all, as
children [of the enlightened ones],

To travel joyously forever through the ages, day and night.

They will ride along on this journey with the bodhisattvas
and the seekers of personal salvation, riding on this
precious vehicle,

Straight to the site of enlightenment.

For this reason, though you seek truly in all the worlds of the
ten directions,

There is no other journey, no other vehicle,

Except in the expedient teachings of the enlightened ones.

I tell you Shariputra:

All of you people are my children, and I am your parent.

Through endless ages you have been burned by many
forms of suffering.

I will save all of you, and enable you to come out of the
three realms.

Although I told you before that you would attain nirvana,
That you will just finish with birth and death,
In reality you will not be obliterated.

What you must work for now is the wisdom of the
enlightened ones.

If there are bodhisattvas here in this assembly,
They will listen with one mind to the real teaching of all the
enlightened ones.

All the enlightened ones, the world honored ones, employed
expedient means,

And the living beings they taught were all bodhisattvas.

As for the people of little wisdom, who are deeply attached
to their desires,

It was for their sake that the enlightened ones taught the
truths of [the origin and ending of] suffering.

In their minds they rejoiced, and experienced what they had
never known before.

When the enlightened ones taught the truths of suffering,
In reality there was no difference [from the One Journey to
Enlightenment].

There were living beings who did not know the roots of their
suffering,

Who were deeply attached to the causes of their suffering,
And could not give them up, even for a little while.

It was for the sake of people like these,
That the enlightened ones resorted to expedient means
when they taught the path.

Suffering is based on greedy desires –
If greedy desires are eliminated, suffering has nothing to
rest on.

Ending all suffering is called the third noble truth.
Because of the truth of the elimination of suffering,
These people could cultivate the path
And detach themselves from the bonds of suffering –
This is called liberation.

By what means did these people manage to attain
liberation?

They simply detached from what is false and called this
liberation.

In reality they had not yet achieved overall liberation.

The enlightened ones say that people like this have not yet
really attained nirvana,

Because they have not yet found the Supreme Path.

My intent is not to enable them to arrive at nirvana as
annihilation.

I am the King of the Teaching of Truth, and I have
sovereignty over the Teaching –

I appeared in the world to bring peace to living beings.

I tell you, Shariputra, with this Seal of Truth that I have,

I teach in order to benefit the world.

Wherever I travel, I never spread falsehood.

If some who hear me feel joy and accept the teaching of this
sutra,

You should realize that these people are those who will
never turn back on the Path to Enlightenment.

If some believe and accept this teaching,

These people have been in the presence of the enlightened
ones of the past –

They have offered them respect, and served them, and also
heard this teaching from them.

If some people are able to believe what you have said,

Then they have seen me, and they have also seen you,

And the mendicant monks and nuns, and the bodhisattvas.

This *Lotus Sutra* is taught for those of deep wisdom.

When those of shallow knowledge hear it,

They become confused and do not understand it.

In this sutra there are truths

Beyond the range of those who seek personal salvation and
those who achieve solitary illumination.

You yourself, Shariputra, were able to enter into this sutra
by means of your faith.

This is even truer for the others who seek personal salvation

—

It is because they have faith in the words of the Buddha that
they can follow this sutra.

It is not due to their own wisdom.

Shariputra, you should not teach this sutra to people who
are arrogant and lazy and who assume their false
selves are real.

Ordinary people have shallow understanding

And are deeply attached to the five desires.

If they hear this teaching, they are incapable of
understanding it,

So do not speak of it to them.

If people who do not believe in this sutra slander it,

They will cut off all the seeds of enlightenment in the
mundane world,

They will fret and fume and be full of doubt and confusion.

Now listen while I tell you the results they will reap for their
misdeeds.

Whether there is an enlightened one living in the world at
the time, or the enlightened one has passed away,

Those who slander a sutra such as this,

Those who see people chanting this sutra and writing it out
and memorizing it,

And mock them and despise them and hate them and hold
a grudge against them —

Listen while I tell you how their misdeeds will be rewarded.
When these people die, they will go to uninterrupted hell for
a whole eon,
And when the eon ends, they will be born again in hell,
And this cycle will go on through countless eons.
When they get out of hell, they will be born as animals,
As dogs, as jackals, all emaciated and scabrous,
Covered with blisters and sores,
Mocked by everyone,
Or they will be despised and held in contempt by people.
They will always be tired, hungry, thirsty,
Nothing but desiccated skin and bones,
Tormented while they are alive, buried in the rubble when
they are dead.
Because they cut off the seeds of enlightenment,
They will suffer these rewards for their misdeeds.
They may be reborn as camels or as donkeys,
Bearing heavy loads as long as they live,
Whipped and prodded,
Thinking only of water and fodder,
Knowing nothing but this –
Such are the punishments incurred for slandering this sutra!
They may be born as jackals,
Who come to the villages scrawny and missing an eye,

To be beaten and lashed by the boys,
To suffer all kinds of pain and finally be killed. After dying
like this, they will be reborn as monstrous serpents,
Long and broad, deaf, stupid, limbless,
Slithering along on their bellies,
Preyed upon by all sorts of small insects,
Suffering pain day and night without any rest –
Such are the punishments incurred for slandering this sutra!
If they get to become human beings again,
They will be dim and dull in all their faculties,
Puny, crude, deformed, blind, deaf, hunchbacked.
No one will believe anything they say,
Their breath will stink,
They will be possessed by demons,
They will be destitute, the lowest of the low,
Used by other people, plagued with many diseases,
scrawny and emaciated,
With nowhere to turn and nothing to rely on.
If they try to get close to other people, no one will pay any
attention to them.
If they ever get anything, they will soon lose it.
If they study medicine and prescribe a drug for someone's
sickness,
It will make the person's disease more serious, and may
even cause the person to die.

If they are sick themselves, no one will be able to cure them.

Even if they take the proper medicines, they will become even sicker.

They will find that others turn against them, and they will be plundered and robbed.

The evil they have done will bring on disasters.

These evildoers will never see the enlightened ones, the kings of the sages, teaching and transforming people.

These evildoers will always be reborn in difficult situations.

They will be crazed, unable to hear, with their minds in chaos –

They will never hear the Teaching.

For eons countless as the sands,

They will be born deaf and dumb, with their faculties defective.

Always in hell, they will wander through it as if sightseeing in a garden.

They will feel at home in the evil planes of existence.

As beasts of burden, as pigs, as dogs – this is how they will go through life.

They will incur such punishments because they slandered this sutra.

If they get to be human again, they will be deaf and blind and dumb,

They will be destitute and enfeebled,

Covered with blisters and sores and scabs –

These will be their adornments, these will be their
vestments.

Their bodies will emit foul odors, they will be filthy and
defiled.

Deeply attached to their view that the imaginary self is real,
They will increase their anger and hatred.

Burning with lust and desire, they will not shrink from
bestiality.

They will incur such punishments because they slandered
this sutra.

I tell you, Shariputra, endless ages would not be enough to
describe the heinous crime of those who slander this
sutra.

This is why I say to you:

Do not preach this sutra among ignorant people!

You can only preach this sutra to people whose wisdom
gives them clear understanding,

People who are learned and have strong intellects,

People who are seeking the Path to Enlightenment.

You can only preach this sutra to people who have met
millions of enlightened ones,

People who have planted good roots,

People whose minds are profound and solid and strong.

If people are diligently making spiritual progress,

If they are always cultivating the mind of compassion and
are generous and unstinting with their bodies and their
lives –

Only to such people can you preach this sutra.

If people are respectful and undeviating in their minds,
If they leave behind all the ordinary stupidity and live in
solitude in the wilderness –

Only to such people can you preach this sutra.

Shariputra, if you see people who get rid of evil ideas
And approach virtuous friends –

Only to such people can you preach this sutra.

If they are children of the enlightened ones,
Who with pure minds speak the truth unobstructed,
Using all sorts of stories of causes and conditions,
Metaphoric explanations and skillful expressions –

Only to such people can you preach this sutra.

If there are mendicants who for the sake of all-knowledge
travel the world seeking the Truth,

Who salute the Truth and accept it,

Who enjoy nothing but accepting and upholding the
scriptures of the Great Journey and will not memorize
even a verse of any other scriptures –

Only to such people can you preach this sutra.

If there are people who with totally sincere minds seek the
traces of the enlightened ones,

Who seek scriptures like the *Lotus Sutra* ,
And when they find them, honor and accept them,
And do not seek any other scriptures,
And never pay attention to deluded heretical texts –
Only to such people can you preach this sutra.

I tell you, Shariputra, endless ages would not be enough to
fully describe the characteristics of those who seek the
Path to Enlightenment.

These are the kind of people who can believe and
understand this sutra –

You must preach this *Lotus Sutra* for them.

Chapter 4: Decisive Liberation

What [the Buddha's senior disciples] Subhūti, Mahakatyayana, Mahakashyapa, and MahaMaudgalyayana heard at that time from the Buddha was a teaching they had never encountered before in the life of wisdom.

The World Honored One had predicted that Shariputra would attain ultimate perfect enlightenment.

The [four monks] were filled with a rare joy. They arose from their seats and straightened out their robes. They bared their right shoulders and knelt down on one knee and joined their palms together in a gesture of wholehearted respect. Gazing reverently at the face of the Buddha, they said to him:

“We occupy the position of leaders of the monks, and we are old and frail. We assumed that we had already attained nirvana and there was nothing more we were capable of. We have not moved onward to seek ultimate perfect enlightenment.

“O World Honored One, it was a long time ago that you began teaching. We have sat in our seats with our bodies growing weak and indolent. Our thoughts have been focused on emptiness, formlessness, inaction. We were not gladdened by the joyous powers of the bodhisattva teaching to purify the buddha-land and perfect living beings.

“Why? Because you had enabled us to go beyond the three realms [of desire, form, and formless meditation states] and attain the experience of nirvana. What's more, we have grown old and

weak, and we have taken no delight in the Buddha teaching bodhisattvas about ultimate perfect enlightenment.

“But today, in your presence, we have heard you give a prediction of ultimate perfect enlightenment to a monk who had sought only personal salvation, and so our minds are joyous, and we are experiencing what we never before experienced. We did not think that today we would unexpectedly get to hear such a rare teaching. We feel a deep sense of good fortune, of gaining a great advantage, as if infinite treasures have come to us by themselves without being sought.

“O World Honored One, now we would like to relate a metaphor to explain what this means to us.

“It is as if there was a young man who abandoned his father and ran away. He lived for a long time in alien lands, for ten years, twenty years, fifty years. He grew old and became more and more destitute, wandering all over, frantically seeking food and clothing. By and by, in the course of his travels, he happened to head back toward his native land.

“Early on, the father had unsuccessfully searched for his son. He had settled down in a certain city where he became very rich, with wealth beyond measure – gold, silver, all sorts of precious jewels. His storehouses were filled to overflowing, and he had many servants and overseers and employees. He had countless elephants and horses and carriages and wagons and flocks of cattle and sheep. He carried on a profitable trade with all the surrounding countries, and many brokers and merchants worked for him.

“The time came when his poor destitute son, in his wanderings through the villages and towns, finally came to the city where his father had settled down.

“Now the father often thought of his son, though they had been separated for so many years. But he never spoke of this to anyone – he kept it to himself, and his heart was filled with regret.

“The father thought to himself: ‘I have grown old, and I am very wealthy, with gold and silver and jewels and overflowing warehouses. But I have no children to console me. One day when I die, my wealth will be dispersed, since I have no one to entrust it to.’

“So he thought constantly of his son, and cherished this hope: ‘If I find my son again, I will bequeath my wealth to him, and I will be happy and content, with no more worries.’

“After working as a laborer for hire in one place after another, the destitute son arrived at his father’s home. He stood there outside the gate.

“From a distance he saw his father seated on a magnificent chair, with his feet up on a stool decorated with jewels, surrounded by a throng of priests and warriors and householders all treating him with great respect. He wore a necklace of priceless pearls, and he had his overseers with him and attendants on either side holding whisks. Above him was a jeweled canopy, with flowered pennants hanging down. Scented water had been sprinkled on the ground, along with all sorts of flower petals. Precious goods had been set out and arranged, brought forth from within his house to be distributed [to his guests].

“Such was the splendor and grandeur of the scene, the sense of special distinction.

“When the destitute son saw that [this man, whom he did not recognize to be] his father, was such a powerful and influential person, he immediately felt afraid and regretted coming to this place.

“He thought to himself: ‘This must be a king, or someone equal in rank to a king. This is not a place where I can get something by hiring myself out as a laborer. I had better go off to some poor village, where there is a market for casual labor, and clothing and food are easy to obtain. If I stay here much longer, I may be captured and forced to work for them.’ Thinking along these lines, he ran away.

“At the same time, sitting there on his lion seat, the old man saw his son and immediately recognized him. He was overjoyed and thought this: ‘Now I have someone to whom to entrust my wealth. I have been constantly thinking of this son of mine, but I had no way to get to see him. Now he suddenly appears on his own, and my wish has been fulfilled. Though I am old in years, I am still as attached as ever [to my son].’

“He immediately dispatched one of his attendants to go after his son and bring him back. So the servant hurried off to catch the son and make him come back.

“The destitute son became alarmed by this and cried out in a loud voice: ‘I haven’t done anything wrong. Why are you trying to catch me?’

“The servant quickly laid hold of him and dragged him back [to his father’s house].

“The destitute son thought to himself that he was being taken captive, even though he had done nothing wrong. He assumed he would surely be put to death, so he became even more agitated and terrified. In complete despair, he fainted and fell to the ground.

“His father saw all this from a distance. So he told the servant: ‘I have no need of this man. Do not force him to come over here. Take some cool water and sprinkle it on his face to wake him up, and don’t say anything more to him.’

“What was his reason for doing this? The father knew that his son had the aspirations and mentality of a lowborn person, and he realized that his own power and high rank would put his son off.

“He well knew that this was his son, but he used expedient means, and did not say to him, ‘You are my son.’ He had his servant say to him, ‘I am releasing you now. You can go wherever you want.’

“The destitute son was delighted at the unexpected turn of events. He got up from the ground, and went off toward the poorer quarters, to look for something to wear and something to eat.

“Then the old father devised a means to induce his son to return to him. He secretly dispatched two of his men, who looked poor and bedraggled themselves, and who bore no mark of rank or prestige, telling them: ‘Go there and gently tell this destitute son of mine that there is a place where he can work for double pay. If he agrees, bring him here and put him to work. If he asks what work you

want him to do, then you can tell him, “We are hiring you to clear away filth. The two of us will be working with you.” ’

“The two men immediately went looking for the destitute son, and when they found him, they told him all this.

“The destitute son took the pay in advance, and went to work with them clearing away filth. When the father saw his son [doing this work], he felt sorry for him, and saw how strange he looked.

“The next day he was looking at his son from a distance through a window. He saw how weak and emaciated and haggard his body was, and saw that he was smeared with manure and dirt. He was filthy.

“So the father took off his jewelry and his fine soft garments, and changed into some rough and ragged clothing. He smeared himself with dirt, and took up a shovel for clearing away manure. Then with [the manner of an overseer and] an intimidating look on his face, he told the men working, ‘Work harder, you men, don’t be lazy!’ By this expedient, he managed to approach his son.

“A little while later he spoke to his son again: ‘You should work here permanently. Don’t go off somewhere else [looking for work]. I will increase your wages. You won’t have to worry about anything you need – rice, wheat, salt, vinegar, cooking utensils. I even have an old servant I can let you have when you need him. You should set your mind at ease.

“ ‘I will be like a father to you – you do not have to worry any more. Why am I doing this? I am old, and you are young and strong. You work all the time, and you do not cheat or slack off or grumble. I

have never seen you display these evils, as the rest of the workers do. From this day onward you will be like a natural born son to me.'

"From then on, the old man renamed him, and gave him a name as his son.

"Although the son was delighted by this turn of events, he still thought of himself as a lowly hired hand. Therefore, the old man had him continue to work all the time clearing away filth for twenty years.

"After all that time had passed, there got to be a mutual understanding and trust between the father and son, and they came and went in each other's presence without difficulty. Still, they continued to live apart as they had before [the son in his hut, the father in his mansion].

"But the time came when the old man was ill, and he knew that before long he would die.

"He said to his son: 'I have a lot of gold and silver and jewels, and my warehouses are full. You know all about how much there is in them, and what is to be taken in, and what is to be paid out. It is my intention [that you take charge], and you must understand what I have in mind. Why? By now there is no difference or divergence between you and me. You must apply your mind, and not let all this wealth be dissipated and lost.'

"The son, having received these instructions from his father, took charge of the gold and silver and jewels and warehouses, without any thought of taking anything for himself.

"But he still lived in his old humble abode, and he could still not get rid of his lowly mentality.

“A little more time went by, and the father realized that his son’s mentality was gradually becoming more expansive and magnanimous, and that he was becoming intent on achieving great things, and looked down on his former state of mind.

“When the end was near, the father directed his son to call together all their kinfolk, along with the king of the country and the great ministers and the warriors and householders.

“When they had all assembled, the father proclaimed to them: ‘All of you should know that this is my son, my own natural born son. [Years ago] in another city he left us and ran away, and he spent many years on his own, suffering hardships. His original name is such-and-such, and my original name is such-and-such. In the old days in our original home city, I anxiously went looking for him, but now in this place I happened to find him. This is really my son, and I am really his father. Now all the wealth that I possess is his. He knows all the expenses and all the revenues.’

“O World Honored One, at that moment when the destitute son heard his father saying this, he was filled with great joy, beyond what he had ever experienced. He thought, ‘This is something I had never hoped for or sought for – now this treasure has come to me of itself.’

“The rich father [in the story] represents you,” [Mahakashyapa said to the Buddha], “and we are all like your children. You have been saying all along that we are your children.

“O World Honored One, we have experienced all sorts of afflictions amid birth and death, due to the three forms of suffering.

[\[13\]](#)-Deluded and ignorant, we have felt joy in being attached to the

lesser teachings. Now you have made us think again and clear away the filth of doctrinal sophistries.

“We worked hard at this and made progress and reached nirvana – one day’s wages. Having attained this, we were overjoyed, and we supposed it was enough. We thought, ‘Because we have worked hard at the Buddha’s teaching and made progress, our gains have been great.’

“But you already knew that our minds were attached to base desires, and delighted in lesser doctrines, so you indulged us. You did not explain by telling us, ‘You will have your share of the treasure of the knowledge and perception of the ones who arrive at reality.’ Instead, you used the power of expedient means to explain the wisdom of the ones who arrive at reality.

“We attained a single day’s pay from the Buddha, we attained nirvana, and we thought this was a great achievement. We had no intention of seeking this Great Journey.

“We too depended on the wisdom of the ones who arrive at reality, which the enlightened ones explained and set forth to the bodhisattvas, yet we ourselves had no intention of seeking it.

“What was the reason for this? You knew that our minds took pleasure in lesser doctrines, and so you employed the power of expedient means to teach in a way that was adapted to us. We still did not realize that we are the children of the Buddha.

“Only now do we realize that you have not held back the wisdom of the enlightened ones. Why? We have actually been the children of the Buddha all along, and yet we only took pleasure in

lesser truths. If we had had the mentality to take pleasure in anything greater, then you would have taught us the truth of the Great Journey.

“In this sutra you only speak of the One Journey, though before, in the presence of the bodhisattvas, you have criticized the seekers of personal salvation for preferring lesser teachings, while the enlightened ones are in fact teaching the Great Journey.

“Therefore we admit that we originally had no intention of seeking such a thing, but now the great treasure of the King of the Teaching has come to us of itself, and we have found what as children of the Buddha we should have found.”

Then, in order to reiterate his meaning, Mahakashyapa spoke in verse:

Today we rejoice as we hear the Buddha’s voice teaching –
We learn what we have never learned before.

The Buddha tells us that even seekers of personal salvation
Will attain buddhahood.

The supreme treasure arrives without being sought!

It’s like the story of the prodigal son –

Young and ignorant, he abandoned his father and ran away.

He ranged far afield through alien lands,

Roaming through various countries for decades.

His father sorrowed and searched for him everywhere,

Searched until he was exhausted.

He stopped at last in a certain city

And built himself a house to enjoy the five desires.
His household was rich and grand,
He had much gold and silver,
Magnificent vehicles decorated with precious stones and
pearls,
Elephants and horses and cattle and sheep,
Palanquins and carriages,
Farms and business,
Large numbers of servants and workmen.
He exported and imported goods and lent out money at
interest,
Even to the surrounding countries –
His brokers and merchants were everywhere.
He was surrounded by great throngs of people offering their
respects,
Kings and rulers cherished him,
Powerful ministers and grandees of the realm all respected
him. For all these reasons, many people were
constantly coming and going at his place,
So rich he was, so powerful.
But he was getting on in years,
And he grieved more and more for his son,
Morning and night he thought:
“The time for me to die is drawing near.
My foolish son abandoned me decades ago.

What will I do with my accumulated wealth?"

At the same time his destitute son

Was wandering from town to town, from country to country,

Seeking clothing to wear and food to eat.

Sometimes he found some, sometimes he did not.

He was hungry and weak and emaciated,

His body was covered with sores.

As he moved along from one place to the next,

He came to the city where his father lived.

Working for wages in one place after another,

He finally arrived at his father's house.

At the time the old man was sitting on a lion seat inside his
gate,

With a jeweled banner flying above him,

Surrounded by his retainers and various attendants and
guards.

Some of them were counting gold and silver and precious
gems,

Recording expenditures and revenues and property in
ledger books.

The destitute son saw his father,

So powerful and exalted and held in high honor,

And thought he must be a king.

Thinking him a king, the son was alarmed and worried:

"Why have I come here?"

He thought to himself: "If I stay here long, they will capture me and force me to work as a slave."

Thinking this, he quickly fled.

He asked the way to the poor quarters, wanting to go there and get hired as a laborer.

The rich old man, sitting on his lion seat, saw his son from a distance,

He recognized him, but kept silent.

He immediately ordered his servants to pursue his son and bring him back.

The destitute son cried out in alarm, not knowing what was happening, and fell to the ground.

"This man has seized hold of me, and I will be killed.

What good are food and clothing, if they have brought me to this?"

The rich old man knew his son was ignorant and had a narrow, low perspective on life.

He knew his son would not believe what he said, would not believe that he was his father.

So he resorted to an expedient, and again sent some other men,

Who looked grizzled and impoverished themselves,

With nothing about them to inspire awe.

"You should say to him that you will hire him to clear away filth, and that he will be paid double wages."

When the destitute son heard this, he was very happy and
went off with the men sent by his father

To work at clearing away filth and cleaning out various
buildings.

The rich old man often looked at him from the window,
And thought how ignorant and low his son was, how he
liked doing menial work.

Then the rich old man put on dirty ragged clothes,
And carrying a shovel for clearing away manure,
Went to where his son was.

Approaching him by means of this expedient,
He spoke to him and urged him to work hard:

“I will raise your wages, I will give you oil to rub on your feet,
I will give you ample food and drink and a thick, warm
mattress of straw.”

So the father both spoke to him harshly: “You must work
harder!”

And then spoke to him gently: “You are like my own son.”

The rich old man was wise, and gradually allowed his son to
come and go [freely in his house].

After twenty years, the son was in charge of household
affairs.

The father showed him his gold and silver and pearls.

He had his son oversee all the goods that went out and
came in.

But the son was still living beyond the gate, in a simple
thatched hut.

He thought about his poverty: “I don’t have any of these
things.”

His father was aware that his son’s mind was gradually
expanding,

And he wanted to share his wealth with him.

So he called together all his kinsmen, the king and the great
ministers, the warriors and householders,

And to this great gathering announced:

“This is my son.

He abandoned me and traveled off to other places for
decades.

Twenty years have gone by since I first saw him again.

Before that, after I lost him in our original hometown,

I had searched for him all over,

And that is how I finally arrived here.

All I possess, all these buildings and all these retainers,

I entrust to him to make use of as he pleases.”

The son recalled his former poverty,

And thought how low his aspirations had been.

Now at his father’s home,

He was acquiring all sorts of wealth, jewels, houses,
buildings –

He felt a great joy, such as he had never experienced
before.

This is the way the Buddha acted too [with us] –

He knew we were delighted by petty things,

So he never said to us, “You will become enlightened
beings.”

Instead he taught us that we would become free from
defilement,

And accomplish the Lesser Journey, as seekers of personal
salvation.

Now the Buddha has given us his command to teach the
Supreme Path.

If we cultivate this, we are sure to attain enlightenment.

We will accept the Buddha’s teaching,

And become great bodhisattvas.

Using all sorts of causes and conditions,

All sorts of metaphors and explanations, all sorts of
language,

We will preach the Supreme Path.

The children of the Buddha will hear from us the Teaching –

Day and night they will think of it and diligently practice it.

Now the enlightened ones are giving them their predictions
of enlightenment,

Telling them: “In a future life, you will become buddhas.”

The True Reality of the Teaching,

Which is the esoteric treasure of all the enlightened ones,
Is only set forth for bodhisattvas.

Its true essence was not explained to the likes of us.

We were like that destitute son –

He got close to his father, and although he knew of his
father's wealth,

He had no notion of acquiring it.

As for us, though we spoke of the precious treasure of the
Buddha's teaching,

We ourselves did not aspire to it –

So we too were like the destitute son in the story.

We thought inner annihilation was enough.

All we understood was this, and for us there was nothing
else.

If we heard of purifying the buddha-land,
Or teaching and transforming living beings,
We took no joy in it.

What was the reason for this?

We thought in these terms:

All phenomena are empty and still,

Without birth or annihilation,

Without great or small,

Without defilement, without contrived action.

Thinking like this, we felt no joy.

In our endless night,

We did not yearn for the wisdom of the enlightened ones –
We did not aspire to it,
Yet we thought we had attained the ultimate level of the
teaching.

In our endless night,
We cultivated the teaching of emptiness
To escape from the three realms and the troubles of
affliction.

We dwelt in our final lifetime, in nirvana with a residual
aversion to life.

What the Buddha taught, finding the Path that is not false –
We thought we had already found it,
We thought we had repaid the benevolence of the
enlightened ones.

Though we are children of the Buddha,
And preached the teaching for bodhisattvas, of seeking the
Path to Buddhahood,
Yet we never aspired to this teaching, we never took joy in
it.

[The Buddha,] our teacher and guide, saw our state of mind,
So at first he never urged us forward,
He never said there was a real gain –
He was like the rich father in the story,
Who knew his son's low aspirations,
And used the power of expedient means,

To win over his son's mind gently,
And only after that entrusted him with all his wealth.
The Buddha acted like this too,
Manifesting a rare course of action.
He knew we took pleasure in minor things,
So he used the power of expedient means
To win over our minds,
And only then taught us great wisdom.
Today we have found what we never had found before –
Something we had never expected before,
And now today it comes to us by itself.
We are like that destitute son gaining immeasurable
treasures.
Today, O World Honored One,
We have found the Path, we have found the result –
We have a clear eye for the immaculate teaching.
In our endless night, we held to the Buddha's pure
discipline,
And only now today do we attain the reward.
In the teaching of the King of the Teaching,
We practiced pure conduct for a long time.
Today we attain the immaculate, supreme result –
Today we are truly seekers who have heard the voice of the
Teaching.
By means of the voice of the Buddha Path,

We have heard everything.
Today we are truly worthy ones,
Deserving of support amid this great assembly
Of celestial beings and humans and earth spirits and sky
 gods from all these worlds!
The World Honored One, in his great benevolence,
Has mercifully taught us something so rare,
He has benefited us for countless eons –
How can anyone repay him?
With our hands and feet we serve him,
We bow our heads and give homage.
All the support and service we provide him
Cannot possibly repay him.
Even if we bear him upon our backs for countless ages,
Even if we honor him with all our hearts,
Even if we provide him with delicious delicacies,
Or countless bejeweled garments, or bedding, or various
 medicines,
Or sandalwood, or precious stones,
Even if we build memorials and temples, and spread
 precious fabrics over the ground,
Even if we offer him all of these things for countless ages,
We can never repay him.
Enlightened beings are rare.
Their infinite, boundless, inconceivable spiritual powers

Are immaculate and uncontrived –
They are the kings of all true teachings.
For the sake of lowly beings, they endure many things –
They take on the appearance of ordinary people,
And teach them according to what is right for them.
The enlightened ones attain the supreme sovereignty over
the Teaching.
They know the various desires and pleasures of living
beings, and the power of their intent.
The enlightened ones explain the teaching to living beings
According to what they can bear, using countless
metaphors.
They adapt to the good roots planted by living beings in
previous lifetimes –
They know when these have ripened, and when they have
not.
Carefully calculating and drawing distinctions,
They adapt to what is right for the situation,
And teach the Path of the One Journey as though there
were three journeys.

Chapter 5: The Metaphor of the Medicinal Herbs

Then the World Honored One said to Mahakashyapa and the other great disciples:

“Well done, well done! You have done well describing the true merits of the ones who arrive at reality.

“It is truly as you say: the ones who arrive at reality have immeasurable, boundless, uncountable numbers of meritorious qualities, and even if you spoke of them for measureless eons, you would not be able to explain them fully.

“You must realize that the ones who have arrived at reality are the sovereigns of all the teachings, and if they say something, it is not false. They set forth all the teachings using wisdom and skill in means, and all the teachings that they set forth arrive at the stage of all-knowledge.

“The ones who have arrived at reality see the destinations of all the teachings, and they also know the deepest tendencies of the minds of living beings. They comprehend all this without obstruction. Clearly understanding the ultimate level of all the teachings, they show living beings all forms of wisdom.

“Here is a metaphor:

“Throughout many worlds of the galaxy, the natural landscape gives life to all sorts of trees and bushes and medicinal herbs. There are many species, with various names and forms.

“In these worlds, the clouds spread over the sky and send down timely rain, which waters everything. All the plants receive

water, according to their size, no matter whether their roots and stems and branches and leaves are large, medium-sized, or small. They all receive the same rain, but they live and grow and put forth flowers and fruits according to the nature of their species. Though the same earth gives them life, and the same rain waters them, they are all different from one another.

“You must understand that it is also this way with the ones who arrive at reality. They appear in the world like the great rain-bringing clouds, and their voices are heard throughout the world among celestial beings and humans and jealous spirits, just as the great clouds cover the lands.

“They proclaim to great assemblies: ‘I am one who has arrived at reality, worthy of being supported, with true all-encompassing knowledge, with enlightened conduct, beyond mundane attachments, liberated from worldly concerns, unexcelled, a great teacher and guide, a teacher of celestial beings and humans, an enlightened one, a world honored one.

“ ‘To those who are not yet saved, I bring salvation. To those who are not yet liberated, I bring liberation. To those who are not yet at peace, I bring peace. Those who have not yet attained nirvana, I enable to attain nirvana.

“ ‘I know the present world and the worlds to come as they really are. I am the one who knows all, who sees all, who knows the Path, who opens the Path, who teaches the Path. All of you – celestial beings, humans, jealous spirits – must come here and listen to the Teaching.’

“On these occasions countless thousands and millions of types of living beings come to where the enlightened being is present, to hear the Teaching.

“At these times the one who has arrived at reality observes the faculties of these living beings and sees whether they are sharp or dull, diligent or lazy, and explains the Teaching according to what they are capable of.

“Diverse as these living beings are, the enlightened one makes them all feel joy, so they happily gain real benefit. Having heard the Teaching, these living beings become peaceful in this life and are reborn later in favorable environments where they experience the joy of the Path and get to hear the Teaching. After they have heard the Teaching, they leave behind all obstacles and, according to what they are capable of, amid all the Teachings, they gradually enter into the Path.

“[In this way the Teaching of the enlightened ones] is like that great rain which waters all the bushes and trees and medicinal herbs, which benefit fully according to their kind, and get to live and grow.

“When the ones who have arrived at reality explain the Teaching – [it is of] one consistent quality, one consistent flavor – that is, the quality of liberation, the quality of detachment, the quality of nirvana. Ultimately it arrives at all-knowledge.

“As for those living beings who hear the Teaching of the ones who have arrived at reality, if they uphold it, read it and recite it, if they practice according to the Teaching, they will not even be aware of the merit which they gain. Why is this?

“Only the ones who have arrived at reality know the typical qualities and essential natures of these living beings, what things they pay attention to, what things they think about, what things the practice, how they focus their attention, how they think, how they cultivate practice, what teachings they pay attention to, what teachings they think about, what teachings they carry out, and what they gain from the various teachings.

“The living beings themselves dwell in all sorts of states, but only the ones who have arrived at reality see them as they really are and clearly comprehend them without obstruction. The living beings themselves are like those grasses and trees and medicinal herbs [in the metaphor,] who themselves do not know whether they are tall or medium-sized or small.

“The ones who have arrived at reality know that theirs is a truth with a single consistent quality and a single consistent flavor – that is, the quality of liberation, the quality of detachment, the quality of nirvana, ultimate nirvana that always has the quality of nirvana, and goes back to emptiness.

“The enlightened ones already know this. They observe the mentalities and desires of living beings, and they act to protect them, so they do not immediately teach them about all-encompassing wisdom.

“Kashyapa, you and your colleagues have the rare ability to understand and accept and believe that the ones who arrive at reality set forth the Teaching according to what is appropriate for the situation.

“Why do I say this? Because it is very difficult to understand that all the enlightened ones set forth the Teaching according to what is appropriate for the situation.

At that time, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

The King of the Teaching, who refutes imaginary existence,
Appears in the world and explains the Teaching in all sorts
of ways,

Adapting to the desires of living beings.

The wisdom of the One Who Comes from Truth, the
Honored One,

Is profound and far-reaching.

For a long time he kept silent about this essential truth,
Not attempting to speak of it too quickly.

If people who possess wisdom hear it, they can believe it
and understand it.

If those without wisdom hear it, they are consumed by
doubt,

And miss out on it forever.

This is why the enlightened ones explain it to them
according to their abilities,

And use all sorts of stories to enable people to perceive it
correctly.

You must realize this, Kashyapa:

[The Teaching of the enlightened ones] is like a great cloud

Rising over the world, covering everything everywhere.
The cloud of wisdom contains nurturing moisture –
The lightning flashes, the thunder reverberates far and wide,
Making all beings rejoice.
The light of the sun is screened out,
The earth becomes pure and cool,
The shade spreads out and becomes almost palpable,
The rain comes down everywhere equally.
Falling on all quarters, the water flows down limitlessly,
Replenishing the whole earth.
All the grasses and trees and medicinal herbs and plants
 great and small
That grow on the mountains and in the valleys and ravines –
The hundred kinds of grains, the sprouting crops, the sugar
 cane, the grapes –
Are all watered by the rain, and all flourish.
The dry ground is moistened, and the herbs and trees grow
 luxuriantly.
The water which the cloud gives forth, all of a single flavor,
Is imbibed by the grasses and trees,
And each receives its own measure of moisture.
All the trees and plants, whether tall or medium-sized or
 small,
Each according to its size, get to live and grow.
The roots and stems and branches and leaves,

The flowers and fruits with their shining colors,
Are all reached by one and the same rain,
And all are freshened and brought to life.
By nature they differ in form and size,
But they are one in being brought to life,
And each grows and flourishes in its own way.
It is also this way with the enlightened ones:
They appear in the world like great clouds covering
everything.
Once they have come forth in the world,
They set forth different explanations for the various living
beings
Of the reality of all the teachings.
The great sages, the world honored ones, communicate
these words
To all the celestial beings and humans, in all the
assemblies:
“I am one who has come from Truth,
Honored among humans,
I appear in the world like a great cloud to bring life-giving
rain to everything,
I enable parched and desiccated living beings to leave their
sufferings behind,
To find peace and bliss, the bliss of the world, and the bliss
of nirvana.

All you celestial beings and humans should listen well, and
single-mindedly:

You should all come here and meet with the Most Honored
One.

I am the World Honored One, the peerless one.

I appear in the world to bring peace to living beings.

I set forth for everyone the pure teaching, which is like
sweet dew –

This teaching has one flavor, the flavor of liberation and
nirvana.

With a single wondrous voice, I set forth this truth.

I am constantly creating the causes and conditions for the
Great Journey.

I observe that all things are everywhere equal,

Without [distinctions of] this and that,

Without the mentality of love and hate.

I have no cravings, no attachments, no limits, no
obstructions –

I expound the Teaching forever to everyone with equanimity.

I constantly expound the Teaching for every individual, and
for the multitudes –

I have never done anything but this.

I come and go, sit and stand, and never grow tired –

I give plenitude to the world just as the rain moistens
everything.

I tirelessly spread the rain of the Teaching to everyone
equally –

To noble and mean, highborn and lowborn,

To those who keep the precepts and those who break the
precepts,

To those of impeccable conduct and those with faults,

To those with correct views and those with misguided views,

To those whose faculties are sharp and those whose
faculties are dull –

All these living beings hear my teachings,

And get from it what they are capable of receiving.

They dwell at different levels:

Some live at the level of humans and celestial beings,

Some are wheel-turning kings,

Some are divine monarchs –

These are like the lesser medicinal herbs [in the metaphor
of the rain].

Some understand the immaculate truth,

Some can attain nirvana and wield the six spiritual powers
and attain the three illuminations,

Some live alone in the mountain forests and constantly
practice meditative concentration,

Gaining the experience of those who awaken to
interdependent causation –

These are like the middling medicinal herbs.

Some seek the level of the world honored ones,
They vow that they will become buddhas,
They practice the concentration of making spiritual progress

—

These are like the greater medicinal herbs.

There are also those children of the enlightened ones
whose minds are intent on the Path to Buddhahood,
Who always practice compassion and know that they will
become buddhas,

Whose minds are made up and beyond doubt —

These are like the smaller trees.

There are also those who dwell at peace in spiritual powers,
Who turn the wheel [of the True Teaching] that never goes
backward,

Who save countless millions of beings —

Such bodhisattvas are like the great trees.

The enlightened ones teach everyone equally,
Like the rain, which has a single flavor.

What the living beings receive differs according to their
natures,

Just as the grasses and trees differ in what they draw from
the rain.”

With this metaphor, the Buddha is using an expedient to
indicate that

All the various things he says are to express a single truth.

They are like a drop in the ocean, compared to the wisdom
of the enlightened ones.

The rain of teachings given by the enlightened ones

Fills the world with a truth that has a single flavor.

We cultivate these teachings and practice them according to
our abilities,

Just as the trees and plants and medicinal herbs, no matter
what their size, gradually grow and flourish.

The teachings of all the enlightened ones always use a
single flavor,

To enable beings in all worlds to become complete.

In stages, they gradually practice these teachings, and all
attain the fruits of the Path.

The seekers of personal salvation and the solitary
illuminates,

Dwelling in the mountain forests, in their final incarnation,

Hear the teaching and attain the fruit –

They are likened to the medicinal herbs that grow.

The bodhisattvas whose wisdom is strong and solid,

Who completely comprehend the three realms and seek the
Supreme Journey –

They are likened to the small trees that grow.

Those who dwell in meditative concentration and achieve
spiritual powers,

Whose minds rejoice when they hear that all phenomena
are empty of inherent identity,

Who send forth countless light rays and bring salvation to
living beings –

They are likened to the great trees that grow.

In this way, Kashyapa, the teachings given by the
enlightened ones can be likened to a great cloud

That gives forth rain with a single flavor,

That benefits the human flowers so that they all bear fruit.

You must understand this, Kashyapa:

The enlightened ones use all kinds of circumstances, all
kinds of metaphors and explanations,

To reveal the Path to Buddhahood.

This is our skill in means, these are our expedient methods
–

All the enlightened ones are like this.

Today I have told all of you the true reality of the matter:

The seekers of personal salvation have not reached the
stage of final nirvana.

What you must practice is the bodhisattva path –

Gradually cultivate it and learn it, and you will all become
buddhas.

Chapter 6: Predictions of Enlightenment

At that time, having finished speaking this verse, the World Honored One made this announcement to the great assembly:

“In future worlds, my disciple Mahakashyapa will get to meet millions of enlightened ones. He will serve them and offer them respect and revere them and praise them. He will transmit the immeasurable great teaching of the enlightened ones on a wide scale.

“In his final incarnation, he will succeed in becoming a buddha, and his name will be Radiance of Light. He will be one worthy of support, of true all-encompassing knowledge, of enlightened conduct, righteous, liberated from the world, a peerless being, a master guide, a teacher of celestial beings and humans, a buddha, one who has arrived at reality.

“His land will be called Virtue of Light, and his era will be called Great Adornment. His lifespan as a buddha will be twelve lesser eons, and his correct teaching will survive in the world for twenty lesser eons, and the semblance of his teaching will continue for another twenty lesser eons.

“His land will be well-ordered and beautiful, free from pollution, free from evil, without any refuse or waste lands, without any filth. The land will be level and smooth, without any holes or bumps. The ground will be glittering and there will be rows of jewel trees. The roads will be marked off with golden ropes, and there will be jewel flowers scattered all over the pure ground.

“In his land there will be countless millions of bodhisattvas, and also uncountable numbers of those who awaken by contemplating interdependent causation. There will be no delusive activities, even though delusive demons and deluded people will exist, because all will be under the protection of the Buddha’s Teaching.”

At that time, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

To everyone present here I announce this:

With the eye of an enlightened one I see

That in a future world, after countless eons, Kashyapa will
become a buddha.

In future lifetimes he will get to meet and serve millions of
enlightened ones.

He will cultivate pure practice in the service of the wisdom of
the enlightened ones.

He will support and serve the peerless enlightened ones,
And cultivate all forms of unsurpassed wisdom.

In his final incarnation, he will succeed in becoming a
buddha.

His land will be pure, with crystalline ground and jewel trees
along the roads,

And golden ropes marking off the boundaries of the paths –
All who see it will rejoice.

These trees will give off a fine fragrance and scatter
multitudes of blossoms.

All kinds of special wonders will adorn this land –
The ground will be level and smooth, without bumps or
holes.

There will be countless numbers of bodhisattvas
With their minds harmonized, who have arrived at great
spiritual powers,
Who serve the enlightened ones, and the scriptures of the
Great Journey,

And there will also be countless numbers of those who
awaken by contemplating interdependent causation,
In their last stainless incarnations,
Children of the King of the Teaching,
Whose number cannot be calculated even by the divine
eye.

This buddha's lifespan will be twelve lesser eons.
His correct teaching will persist in the world for twenty lesser
eons.

The semblance of his teaching will also survive twenty
lesser eons.

Such will be the deeds of the World Honored One Radiance
of Light.

Then the great disciples Maudgalyayana, Subhūti, and
Mahakatyayana, trembling in fear, with a single mind joined their
palms together and looked up at the Buddha's face. With their eyes
never leaving him for a moment, they spoke this verse together:

O Great Hero, O World Honored One,

King of the Teaching, scion of the Shakya clan –
Out of pity for us, you have let us hear your voice.
If you know our deepest minds,
When we see you give Kashyapa a prediction of
 enlightenment,
It is as if you have anointed us with sweet dew,
Which dispels our fevers and makes us pure and cool.
It is as though someone coming from a country cursed by
 famine

Suddenly encounters fine food, fit for a king,
But his mind still harbors doubt and fear,
And he does not dare start eating this fine food.
Only if he can get the king's go-ahead,
Only then will he dare to eat this fine food.
We are the same way –
We are always mindful of our faults on the Lesser Journey.
We do not know what we should do to attain the supreme
 wisdom of the enlightened ones.

Though we hear the Buddha's voice telling us we will
 become buddhas,
Our minds are still full of fear and trepidation –
We are like the one who does not dare begin eating.
If we could get your prediction that we will become
 enlightened,
Then we would be happy and at peace.

O Great Hero, O World Honored One,
You who always want to bring peace to the world,
Please grant us your prediction of enlightenment,
As if you were telling starving people to go ahead and eat.

The Buddha knew what was on the minds of his great disciples,
and so he told the assembly:

“In future worlds this disciple of mine, Subhūti, will get to meet millions of enlightened ones. He will serve them and offer them respect and revere them and praise them. He will always cultivate pure conduct, and he will become fully prepared on the bodhisattva path.

“In his final incarnation, he will succeed in becoming a buddha, and his name will be Renowned Form. He will be one worthy of support, of true all-encompassing knowledge, of enlightened conduct, righteous, liberated from the world, a peerless being, a master guide, a teacher of celestial beings and humans, a buddha, one who has arrived at reality.

“His era will be called Treasure Laden, and his land will be called Born of Treasure.

“His land will be level and smooth. The ground will shine like glass, and it will be adorned with jewel trees. It will have no bumps or holes, no sand or gravel, no thorns or brambles, no filth. Jewel flowers will cover the land, everywhere pure. The inhabitants of his land will dwell in jewel pavilions and towers made of precious things.

“He will have countless disciples who awaken by contemplating interdependent causation, and countless bodhisattvas around him.

“His lifespan as a buddha will be twelve lesser eons, and his correct teaching will survive in the world for twenty lesser eons, and the semblance of his teaching will continue for another twenty lesser eons.

“This buddha will constantly abide in emptiness while explaining the teaching to those who gather to hear him, and he will bring liberation to countless bodhisattvas and seekers of salvation.”

Then, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

To everyone present here, I say this:

All of you must single-mindedly listen to what I say.

My great disciple Subhūti will succeed in becoming a
buddha –

His name will be Renowned Form.

He will have served countless millions of enlightened ones,
And followed the practices which the enlightened ones
practice,

Until he gradually becomes fully equipped for the Great
Path.

In his final incarnation he will attain the thirty-two
characteristics of an enlightened one.

He will be grand and wondrous as a mountain of jewels.

His buddha-land will be unsurpassed in dignity and purity –

All living beings who see it will love it and feel happy.

As the buddha in this land, he will bring salvation to
countless beings.

His teaching of enlightenment will produce many
bodhisattvas

With sharp faculties who turn the wheel [of the truth] that
never retreats –

His land will be constantly adorned with bodhisattvas.

Countless numbers of seekers of salvation [in his land]

Will attain the three forms of illumination,

Will become equipped with the six spiritual powers,

Will abide in the eight liberations,

Will have great awe-inspiring virtue.

When this buddha expounds the teaching,

He will manifest the transformations wrought by
immeasurable spiritual powers and display the
inconceivable.

Celestial beings and humans as numberless as the sands of
the Ganges

Will join together and salute him –

They will listen to and accept his words as a buddha.

His lifespan as a buddha will be twelve lesser eons.

His correct teaching will survive in the world for twenty
lesser eons.

The semblance of his teaching will also last for another
twenty lesser eons.

Then the World Honored One said to the assembly:

“Today I tell you that Mahakatyayana in future worlds will serve and support millions of enlightened ones, respect and honor them. After each of these enlightened ones passes away, he will erect a great memorial tower built of gold, silver, crystal, agate, pearls, carnelian, and the seven precious stones. At these towers he will make offerings of masses of flowers and garlands and various types of incense, and silken canopies, and flags and streamers.

“After this he will again make the same offerings to more millions of enlightened ones.

“Having served all these enlightened ones, he will be fully equipped in the bodhisattva path and will become a buddha. His name will be Golden Light. He will be one worthy of support, of true all-encompassing knowledge, of enlightened conduct, righteous, liberated from the world, a peerless being, a master guide, a teacher of celestial beings and humans, a buddha, one who has arrived at reality.

“His land will be level and smooth, with the ground shining like glass, adorned with jewel trees, with the paths marked off by golden ropes. Wondrous flowers will cover the ground, everywhere clear and pure, and those who see it will rejoice. There will be no such thing as the four evil planes of existence – the planes of hell-beings, hungry ghosts, animals, jealous spirits – and there will be many celestial beings and humans. Seekers of salvation and bodhisattvas beyond counting will adorn his land.

“His lifespan as a buddha will be twelve lesser eons, and his correct teaching will survive in the world for twenty lesser eons, and

the semblance of his teaching will continue for another twenty lesser eons.”

Then, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

Everyone present hear should listen single-mindedly –

What I have told you is nothing but the truth.

Katyayana will serve and support the enlightened ones with
all these wonderful things.

After each of these enlightened ones dies, he will erect
memorial towers made of the seven precious jewels

And make offerings to their relics with flowers and incense.

In his final incarnation he will attain the wisdom of the
buddhas

And achieve correct enlightenment.

His land will be pure and clean,

And he will bring liberation to countless millions of living
beings.

He will be supported by everyone everywhere –

Nothing will be able to surpass his light as an enlightened
one.

This buddha will be called Golden Light.

Bodhisattvas and seekers of salvation will cut through all
forms of existence

And adorn his land in countless numbers.

Then the World Honored One said to the assembly:

“Today I tell you that the great Maudgalyayana will serve and support millions of enlightened ones with all kinds of offerings, and respect and honor them.

“After each of the enlightened ones passes away, he will erect a great memorial tower built of gold, silver, crystal, agate, pearls, carnelian, and the seven precious stones. At these towers he will make offerings of masses of flowers and garlands and various types of incense, and silken canopies, and flags and streamers.

“After this he will again make the same offerings to more millions of enlightened ones.

“He will become a buddha, and his name will be Fragrance of Sandalwood. He will be one worthy of support, of true all-encompassing knowledge, of enlightened conduct, righteous, liberated from the world, a peerless being, a master guide, a teacher of celestial beings and humans, a buddha, one who has arrived at reality.

“His era will be called Filled with Delight, and his land will be called Joy of Intent.

“His land will be level and smooth, with the ground shining like glass, adorned with jewel trees, with pearl flowers strewn over it, everywhere clear and pure. Those who see it will rejoice. There will be numberless celestial beings and humans, bodhisattvas and seekers of personal salvation.

“His lifespan as a buddha will be twenty-four lesser eons, and his correct teaching will survive in the world for forty lesser eons, and

the semblance of his teaching will continue for another forty lesser eons.”

Then, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

This is my disciple the great Maudgalyayana –
After he discards this body,
He will get to meet millions of enlightened ones.
In service to the Path of Enlightenment,
He will support them and honor them.
In the places where these enlightened ones are,
He will always practice pure conduct –
For countless eons he will uphold the teaching of
enlightenment.
After each of these enlightened ones passes away,
He will erect memorial towers made of the seven precious
jewels
To mark the spot forever.
He will make offerings with flowers and incense and music
at the memorial towers of all these enlightened ones.
Gradually, he will become fully equipped for the bodhisattva
path,
And in the land Joy of Intent he will become a buddha.
His name will be Fragrance of Sandalwood.
His lifespan as a buddha will be twenty-four lesser eons,

And he will constantly be explaining the Path to
Enlightenment to celestial beings and humans.

There will be seekers of salvation numberless as the sands,
With the three illuminations and six spiritual powers, and
great dignity and virtue.

There will be countless bodhisattvas with firm intent,
Making progress toward the wisdom of the buddhas and
never turning back.

After this buddha dies, his correct teaching will endure for
forty lesser eons,

And the semblance of his teaching for another forty lesser
eons.

Five hundred of my disciples,
Whose awe-inspiring virtue is complete,
Will all receive predictions of enlightenment.

In future worlds, they will all manage to become buddhas.

Today I will speak of the causes and conditions of our past
lives,

Both yours and mine –

Please listen well.

Chapter 7: The Metaphor of the Illusory Citadel

The Buddha told the assembly:

“Countless ages ago, inconceivably many eons ago, there was an enlightened being, whose name was Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom. He was one worthy of support, of true all-encompassing knowledge, of enlightened conduct, righteous, liberated from the world, a peerless being, a master guide, a teacher of celestial beings and humans, a buddha, a world honored one.

“His land was called Well Formed, and his era was called Greatness.

“A long time has passed since that buddha passed away.

“[How long?] If man took all the lands in the galaxy and ground them up to make ink, and then after passing through a thousand lands to the east, the man put down a single drop of ink, no bigger than a speck of dust, and he again continued on through a thousand more lands, and again put down a single drop of ink, and he kept going like this until he ran out of ink, what do you think the total number of lands would be that he had passed through? Would a mathematician, or the disciples of a mathematician, be able to put a limit on this, or calculate the number?”

The audience answered: “No.”

The Buddha continued: “If you took all the lands that man passed through, the ones where he left a drop of ink, and the ones where he did not leave a drop of ink, and you reduced them all to dust, and you counted one eon for every speck of dust, then the

amount of time that has passed since the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom passed away would surpass this length of time by immeasurable hundreds of thousands of millions of incalculable eons.

“When I observe this far distant time with the perception of one who has arrived at reality, it is as if it were just today.”

Then, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

I remember a past time, countless eons ago,
There was an enlightened one, honored among humans –
He was called Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom.
If someone ground up all soil in all the worlds in the galaxy
to make ink,
And put down a speck of ink after he had passed through a
thousand worlds,
And kept doing this over and over until all the ink was used
up –
If you took all the lands this person had passed through,
And reduced them all to dust,
And you counted one eon for each speck of dust,
The number of eons that have passed
Since that Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom
passed away
Is more than the number of specks of dust –
It is a measureless number of eons.

The unobstructed wisdom of the ones who arrive at reality
Perceives the demise of that buddha,

And all the seekers of truth and the bodhisattvas around
him,

As though it happened just today.

All of you must understand –

The wisdom of the enlightened ones is pure and wondrous,
Immaculate and unobstructed –

It penetrates through countless eons.

The Buddha told the assembly:

“The Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom had a lifespan
of millions of eons.

“When he sat at the site of enlightenment, he annihilated an
army of delusive demons. Then he gave the appearance of attaining
ultimate perfect enlightenment. Yet the reality of the enlightened
ones did not appear before him.

“An eon passed like this, and then ten eons, and he continued
to sit there cross-legged, with neither mind nor body stirring, and still
the reality of the enlightened ones did not appear before him.

“The celestial beings of the second of the heavens of desire
had already set out a lion seat for this enlightened being underneath
the bodhi tree. The seat was miles high, and this enlightened being
would attain ultimate perfect enlightenment in this seat.

“When this enlightened being sat on this seat, the Kings of the
Brahma Heavens sent down a rain of celestial flowers covering the

ground for a hundred miles around. From time to time a fragrant wind would arrive and blow away the withered flowers, and new ones would shower down from the skies.

“It went on like this continuously for ten eons, as an offering to this enlightened being, and these flowers kept raining down until he passed away.

“The four celestial kings kept beating the drums as an offering to the Buddha, and the other celestial beings played heavenly music, and this went on for a full ten eons, until he passed away.

“The Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom passed ten eons like this, and only then did the reality of the enlightened ones finally appear before him, so he attained ultimate perfect enlightenment.

“Before this buddha had left the householder’s life, he had sixteen sons. The first son was called Accumulation of Wisdom. These sons had all sorts of precious and rare playthings, and when they heard that their father had attained ultimate perfect enlightenment, they abandoned the playthings, which they had treasured, and set out to pay a visit to [their father,] the enlightened one.

“Their mothers were in tears as they saw them off.

“Their grandfather was a sagely king, and he accompanied the sixteen sons to the place where the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom had achieved enlightenment, attended by a retinue of one hundred great courtiers and millions of his subjects.

“All of them wanted to approach the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom, to make offerings to him and show their respect, to honor him and praise him. When they arrived where he was, they bowed down at his feet and, with a single mind, joined their hands together and looked up at him and spoke this verse:

O Virtuous One, O World Honored One,
In order to bring salvation to living beings,
After countless millions of eons,
Now at last you have become a buddha.
Your vows are now fulfilled –
How splendid indeed is this supreme good fortune!
How rare to have such a World Honored One!
You sat for ten eons,
With body quiet and peaceful and unmoving –
Your mind was unconcerned,
Never scattered or confused,
Arriving at ultimate permanent nirvana,
Dwelling at peace in the undefiled truth.
Now we see the World Honored One
Peacefully consummating the Buddha Path –
We all benefit from this,
And with great joy we offer our congratulations.
Living beings are always suffering from afflictions.
They are blind without a teacher.
They do not know the path to bring an end to suffering.

They do not know how to seek liberation.
In their endless night, they add to the number of those on
the evil paths,
And reduce the number of those in the heavens.
From darkness, they enter into darkness,
And never hear the names of the enlightened ones.
Now, as an enlightened one, you have attained the
supreme, secure, undefiled Path.
Along with all the celestial beings and humans,
In order to gain the greatest of all benefits.
We all bow our heads and dedicate ourselves to you,
O Peerless One!

Then, having finished their verse of praise, the sixteen sons
said these words to urge their father, the World Honored One Victory
of Great Pervasive Wisdom, to turn the Wheel of the Teaching:

“When a world honored one sets forth the teaching, he brings
peace to celestial beings and humans, he shows his mercy toward
them, and he greatly benefits them.”

Then they spoke another verse:

O Matchless Hero, adorned with a hundred merits –
Having attained supreme wisdom,
Please speak of it to the world.
Deliver us, set us free, and liberate all living beings.
Set forth this wisdom with clear analysis,
And enable us to attain it.

If we can attain buddhahood, so can all living beings.
You know the intentions of the deepest minds of living
beings,
And you know the paths they travel.
You also know their powers of wisdom,
What they desire, what they take pleasure in, what
blessings they cultivate,
What deeds they did in past lives –
Knowing all this, O World Honored One,
You must turn the Wheel of the Supreme Teaching!

Then [Shakyamuni] Buddha told the assembly:

“When the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom achieved ultimate perfect enlightenment, millions of buddha-worlds in the ten directions all trembled, and all the dark recesses in these worlds were illuminated, even those places where the light of the sun and moon never reaches.

“All the living beings in these worlds saw this and said: ‘Why are all the living beings here suddenly trembling, along with all the lands and the heavens and the celestial abodes? Why is this great light illuminating everything, all throughout the world, and outshining the light of the sky?’

“At that moment [when the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom achieved ultimate perfect enlightenment], in all the millions of lands in the east, the radiance of all the celestial abodes was even more brilliant than usual. All the Brahma Kings thought: ‘The light in

our palaces is as never before – what is the reason for this manifestation?’

“Then all these Brahma Kings gathered together to discuss this event. Among them there was a great Brahma King called Savior of All, who spoke this verse to those who had gathered together:

All our palaces are illuminated as never before –

Together we should seek the reason for this –

Has a celestial being of great virtue just been born?

Has an enlightened being appeared in the world?

This great brilliant light is shining throughout the worlds of the ten directions.

“Then all these millions of Brahma Kings filled their robes with celestial flowers, and bringing their palaces along with them, they went together to the west to investigate this manifestation.

“There they saw the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom, one who has arrived at reality, at the site of his enlightenment, beneath the bodhi tree, sitting on a lion seat, surrounded by all sorts of beings paying homage – celestial beings, kings of the ocean spirits, celestial musicians, loving spirits and spirits of eternal time , humans and nonhumans.

“They saw the sixteen royal sons asking the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom to turn the Wheel of the Teaching.

“Then all these Brahma Kings bowed down before the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom and walked around him a hundred thousand times. Then they caused celestial flowers to shower down over the Buddha, flowers the size of the great polar

mountain. With these flowers they made offerings to the Buddha and the bodhi tree, which itself was dozens of miles high.

“After offering the flowers, they presented their palaces to this buddha, saying this: ‘Please have mercy on us, and grant us your blessing. We hope you will be so kind as to accept these palaces which we have offered you.’

“Then these Kings of the Brahma Heavens, there in front of that buddha, with one mind joined their voices together and spoke a verse of praise:

Enlightened ones are rare!
It is hard to get to meet such a being,
Possessed of infinite virtues,
A being who can save and protect all beings,
A great teacher of celestial beings and humans,
Who has compassion for the world.
All the living beings in all the lands of the ten directions
Will benefit from him.
We have come here from millions of worlds –
We have put aside the bliss of deep meditative
concentration
To make an offering to the Buddha.
We have been blessed with the merits of past lives,
Our palaces are wondrously adorned,
Today we present them to you, World Honored One –
We only hope you will be so kind as to accept them.

“At that time, having finished their verse in praise of the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom, these Kings of the Brahma Heavens said this:

“ ‘We only hope that the World Honored One will turn the Wheel of the Teaching, and bring liberation to living beings, and open the path to nirvana.’

“Then these Kings of the Brahma Heavens with one mind joined their voices together and spoke a verse:

O Hero of the World, Most Honored among Humans!
Please set forth the teaching –
Use the power of great compassion
To deliver living beings from the afflictions of suffering.

Then the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom, one who has arrived at reality, silently gave his consent.

“At that moment, in all the millions of lands in the south and east, all the Brahma Kings saw that the radiance of their palaces shone brighter than ever before. Overjoyed, in a rare state of mind, they all visited each other and talked about what had happened.

“In this gathering was a Great King of a Brahma Heaven called Great Compassion, who spoke a verse to all the Brahma Kings:

What is the cause of this event?
What has made this sign appear?
Our palaces are shining as never before –
Has a celestial being of great virtue been born?
Has an enlightened one appeared in the world?

We have never seen such a sign –

We must come together with one mind and seek out the
reason for it.

Let us cross through hundreds and millions of lands,
Seeking this light, and together trace it back.

Probably an enlightened one has appeared in the world
To bring liberation to suffering sentient beings.

“Then all these millions of Brahma Kings filled their robes with
celestial flowers, and bringing their palaces along with them, they
went together to the northwest to investigate this manifestation.

“There they saw the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive
Wisdom, one who has arrived at reality, at the site of his
enlightenment, beneath the bodhi tree, sitting on a lion seat,
surrounded by all sorts of beings paying homage – celestial beings,
kings of the ocean spirits, celestial musicians, loving spirits and
spirits of eternal time , humans and nonhumans.

“They saw the sixteen royal sons asking the Buddha Victory of
Great Pervasive Wisdom to turn the Wheel of the Teaching.

“Then all these Brahma Kings bowed down before the Buddha
and walked around him a hundred thousand times. Then they
caused celestial flowers to shower down over the Buddha, flowers
the size of the great polar mountain. With these flowers they made
offerings to the Buddha and the bodhi tree.

“After offering the flowers, they presented their palaces to this
buddha, saying this: ‘Please have mercy on us, and grant us your

blessing. We hope you will be so kind as to accept these palaces which we have offered you.'

"Then these Kings of the Brahma Heavens, there in front of the Buddha, with one mind joined their voices together and spoke a verse of praise:

O Sage Lord, O King of the Heavens,
With a voice like the nightingale,
O you who have mercy on living beings,
Today we pay homage.
Enlightened ones are rare,
Long ages go by until one appears –
A hundred and eighty eons pass in vain
Without a buddha.
The three evil planes of existence fill up,
The heavenly realms are depleted.
Now a buddha has appeared in the world,
To act as the eye for living beings,
For the world to take refuge in,
To rescue and protect everyone,
To be the father of living beings,
To be their merciful benefactor,
So that today we can encounter an enlightened being.

"Then, having finished their verse in praise of the Buddha, these Kings of the Brahma Heavens said this: 'We only hope that the

World Honored One will take mercy on everyone and turn the Wheel of the Teaching and bring liberation to living beings.’

“Then these Kings of the Brahma Heavens with one mind joined their voices together and spoke a verse:

O Great Sage, turn the Wheel of the Teaching!

Reveal the characteristics of all the teachings,

Bring salvation to living beings afflicted with suffering,

Enable them to find great joy.

When living beings hear this teaching and find the path,

It is as if they are born in heaven –

The evil planes of existence diminish,

And their patience and goodness increase.

“Then the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom, one who has arrived at reality, silently gave his consent.

“At that moment, in all the millions of lands in the south, all the Brahma Kings saw that the radiance of their palaces shone brighter than ever before. Overjoyed, and in a rare state of mind, they all visited each other and talked about what had happened. ‘What was the reason for this light in our palaces?’

“In this gathering was a Great King of a Brahma Heaven called Wondrous Teaching, who spoke a verse to all the Brahma Kings:

An awe-inspiring light is blazing

In all our palaces –

This is not without a cause.

We should seek the cause of this sign –

Has a celestial being of great virtue been born?

Has an enlightened one appeared in the world?

“Then all these millions of Brahma Kings filled their robes with celestial flowers, and bringing their palaces along with them, they went together to the north to investigate this manifestation.

“There they saw the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom, one who has arrived at reality, at the site of his enlightenment, beneath the bodhi tree, sitting on a lion seat, surrounded by all sorts of beings paying homage – celestial beings, kings of the ocean spirits, celestial musicians, loving spirits and spirits of eternal time , humans and nonhumans.

“They saw the sixteen royal sons asking the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom to turn the Wheel of the Teaching.

“Then all these Brahma Kings bowed down before the Buddha and walked around him a hundred thousand times. Then they caused celestial flowers to shower down over the Buddha, flowers the size of the great polar mountain. With these flowers they made offerings to the Buddha and the bodhi tree.

“After offering the flowers, they presented their palaces to this buddha, saying this: ‘Please have mercy on us, and grant us your blessing. We hope you will be so kind as to accept these palaces which we have offered you.’

“Then these Kings of the Brahma Heavens, there in front of the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom, with one mind joined their voices together and spoke a verse of praise:

It is hard to get to meet a World Honored One –

One who breaks up all afflictions.
A hundred and thirty eons have gone by,
And only now do we get to see him.
Hungry and thirsty living beings are filled with the rain of his
teaching,
They have never before seen such a one,
A being of infinite wisdom.
He is like the flower that blooms once in a hundred years,
But today we finally get to meet him.
Our palaces are resplendent with his light.
O World Honored One, Great Compassionate One,
Please favor us by accepting this gift.

“Then, having finished their verse in praise of the Buddha,
these Kings of the Brahma Heavens said this: ‘We only hope that the
World Honored One will turn the Wheel of the Teaching and let the
celestial beings and earth spirits and monastics and laypeople of all
worlds attain peace and find liberation.’

“Then these Kings of the Brahma Heavens with one mind
joined their voices together and spoke a verse:

O you who are honored by celestial beings and humans!
We hope you will turn the wheel of the supreme teaching,
Beat the drum of the great teaching,
Blow the conch shell of the great teaching,
Send down the rain of the great teaching everywhere,
To bring salvation to countless living beings.

We take refuge in you, we implore you –

Let us hear the profound and far-reaching voice of the
teaching!

“Then Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom, one who has arrived
at reality, silently gave his consent.

“At that moment, the same events were occurring in the west
and the south and the nadir.

“At the same moment, in all the millions of lands in the zenith,
all the Brahma Kings saw that the radiance of their palaces shone
brighter than ever before. Overjoyed, and in a rare state of mind,
they all visited each other and talked about what had happened.
‘What was the reason for this light in our palaces?’

“In this gathering was a Great King of a Brahma Heaven called
Crest of Fire, who spoke a verse to all the Brahma Kings:

What is the reason that our palaces
Are filled with an awe-inspiring light today,
And are adorned as never before?
We have never heard of or seen
Such a wondrous sign –
Has a celestial being of great virtue been born?
Has an enlightened one appeared in the world?

“Then all these millions of Brahma Kings filled their robes with
celestial flowers, and bringing their palaces along with them, they
went down together to investigate this manifestation.

“There they saw the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom, one who has arrived at reality, at the site of his enlightenment, beneath the bodhi tree, sitting on a lion seat, surrounded by all sorts of beings paying homage – celestial beings, kings of the ocean spirits, celestial musicians, loving spirits and spirits of eternal time , humans and nonhumans.

“They saw the sixteen royal sons asking the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom to turn the Wheel of the Teaching.

“Then all these Brahma Kings bowed down before the Buddha and walked around him a hundred thousand times. Then they caused celestial flowers to shower down over the Buddha, flowers the size of the great polar mountain. With these flowers they made offerings to the Buddha and the bodhi tree.

“After offering the flowers, they presented their palaces to this Buddha, saying this: ‘Please have mercy on us, and grant us your blessing. We hope you will be so kind as to accept these palaces which we have offered you.’

“Then these Kings of the Brahma Heavens, there in front of the Buddha, with one mind joined their voices together and spoke a verse of praise:

How good it is to see the enlightened ones,
The honored sages who rescue the world,
Who are able to encourage living beings to come out of the
hell of the three realms.
With their all-encompassing wisdom, revered by celestial
beings and humans,

They take pity on the multitudes of living beings as they
sprout up.

They are able to open the pathway of sweet dew,
And bring salvation on a broad scale to all beings.
For countless ages past we lived in vain without an
enlightened teacher.

Before the World Honored One appeared,
Everyone everywhere was covered in darkness –
Hell-beings, hungry ghosts, and animals were on the
increase –
Angry jealous gods, too, flourished.

There were fewer and fewer celestial beings,
And when these died, many fell into the evil planes of
existence.

They did not hear the teachings from the enlightened ones –
They constantly did things that were not good.
Because of their evil deeds,
They lost all joy and they lost the very concept of joy,
They settled down into misguided ideas and teachings,
They did not recognize the proper norms of conduct,
They did not encounter the transformative influence of the
enlightened ones,

They were always falling into evil paths.

The enlightened ones act as the eyes of the world,
And now, after so long, one has come forth.

Enlightened ones appear in the world out of pity for living beings.

They transcend the world and achieve genuine awakening.

Now we are rejoicing along with all living beings –

We are celebrating something we have never experienced before –

Our palaces are resplendent with your light.

So now we are offering them to you, O World Honored One
–

Please be so kind and accept our gift.

We hope that the merit of this offering

Will reach all living beings everywhere,

So that we, along with all living beings,

Can consummate the Path to Buddhahood together.

“Then, having finished their verse in praise of the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom, these millions of Kings of the Brahma Heavens said this to the Buddha: ‘We only hope that the World Honored One will turn the Wheel of the Teaching and bring peace and liberation to living beings.’

“Then these Kings of the Brahma Heavens spoke a verse:

O World Honored One, turn the Wheel of the Teaching!

Beat the drum of the Teaching, which is sweet as dew,

Bring salvation to living beings afflicted with suffering,

Open the pathway to nirvana!

We hope you will accept our request –

With your majestic, wondrous voice,
Show compassion for living beings,
And explain for them the teaching that you have practiced
for countless eons.

“Then the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom, one who arrived at reality, accepted the request made by the Kings of the Brahma Heavens of the ten directions, and by the sixteen royal sons.

“Then he expounded the Teaching in three forms – something that could not be done by the monks, or by the priests, or by the celestial beings, or by the earth spirits, or by the sky gods, or by any inhabitants of other worlds.

“That is to say:

“[First, the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom set forth the teaching of the four truths for seekers of salvation, namely:] suffering, the formation of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

“[Next, the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom] set forth at length the teaching of the twelve causal links [for those who arrive at illumination by contemplating interdependent causation].

“[These are:] ignorance linked to artificial constructs, artificial constructs linked to false consciousness, false consciousness linked to name and form, name and form linked to the six sense media, the six sense media linked to contact, contact linked to sensation, sensation linked to desire, desire linked to grasping, grasping linked to imaginary existence, imaginary existence linked to birth, and birth linked to the sorrows and afflictions of old age and death.

“[Then the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom taught that] when ignorance is annihilated, then artificial constructs are annihilated; when artificial constructs are annihilated, then false consciousness is annihilated; when false consciousness is annihilated, then name and form are annihilated; when name and form are annihilated, then the six sense media are annihilated; when the six sense media are annihilated, then contact is annihilated, when contact is annihilated, then desire is annihilated; when desire is annihilated; then grasping is annihilated; when grasping is annihilated, then imaginary existence is annihilated; when imaginary existence is annihilated, then birth is annihilated; when birth is annihilated, then the sorrows and afflictions of old age and death are annihilated.

“When the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom explained this teaching to the great assembly of gods and humans, there were countless millions of people who stopped being subject to any forms of imaginary being, and who were liberated from all defiled states of mind.

“Thus they arrived at profound, wondrous meditative concentration and found the three illuminations, the six spiritual powers, and the eight forms of liberation.

“The second time and the third time and the fourth time the Buddha explained this teaching, countless millions more stopped being subject to any forms of imaginary being and were liberated from all defiled states of mind.

“From this time onward, there were countless numbers of disciples who had heard the voice of the Teaching.

“Then the sixteen royal sons addressed the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom. These were the princes who as young men had left home to become monks, whose faculties were sharp, whose wisdom was clear, who had already served millions of enlightened beings, whose practice was pure, who were seeking ultimate perfect enlightenment. They said to the Buddha:

“ ‘O World Honored One! All these countless millions of virtuous disciples have now succeeded [in hearing the Teaching]. You should also explain for us the teaching of ultimate perfect enlightenment, so that when we have heard it, we can practice it and learn it together.

“ ‘O World Honored One! We are intent on the knowledge and perception of the ones who arrive at reality, that which their deepest minds are focused on, that which the enlightened ones themselves experience and know.’

“At that time, millions of those under the leadership of the wheel-turning sagely king, [who had become the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom,] saw that [his sons] the sixteen princes had left the worldly life, and they too wanted to leave the worldly life. Their king immediately gave them permission to do so.

“Then this buddha, in response to the request of these novice monks, after twenty thousand eons, was teaching this Great Journey scripture, in the midst of this assembly of monastics and laypeople. It was called the *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth*, teaching the methods of the bodhisattvas, protected by the enlightened ones.

“When this buddha had finished setting forth this scripture, the sixteen novices together accepted it and committed it to memory

until they could recite it fluently. They did this for the sake of ultimate perfect enlightenment.

“When this buddha set forth this scripture, the sixteen novice bodhisattvas all accepted it and believed in it. In the assembly of disciples, there were also those who believed it and understood it, but many others in the audience were full of doubt and confusion.

“The Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom went on expounding this scripture for eight thousand eons, without ever stopping to rest. After he was done teaching, he went into a quiet room and stayed in a state of meditative concentration for eighty-four thousand eons.

“During this time, knowing that the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom had gone into seclusion and was absorbed in a silent state of meditative concentration, the sixteen novice bodhisattvas went up to the teaching seat and for eighty-four thousand eons set forth a vast analysis of the *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* for the benefit of the monastics and laypeople assembled there.

“Each one of the novice bodhisattvas brought salvation to countless millions of living beings, imparting the teaching to them, benefiting them, bringing them joy, and enabling them to generate the mind of ultimate perfect enlightenment.

“After eighty-four thousand eons had passed, the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom arose from his state of absorption and went back to the teaching seat. He sat there perfectly at peace and said to the great assembly:

“ ‘These sixteen novice bodhisattvas are indeed a rare marvel, with their sharp faculties, their clear wisdom, their service to countless millions of enlightened beings. They have practiced pure conduct with the buddhas, and they have accepted and upheld the wisdom of the buddhas. They have shown the way to living beings, and enabled them to enter among the buddhas.

“ ‘All of you, numerous as you are, should approach them and serve them. Why? Because whether you are seekers of personal salvation, or solitary illuminates, or even bodhisattvas, if you can have faith in the teachings in the scripture which these sixteen bodhisattvas are setting forth, if you can accept these teachings and uphold them and not reject them, then you will attain ultimate perfect enlightenment, the wisdom of the ones who arrive at reality.”

[Shakyamuni] Buddha told the assembly:

“These sixteen bodhisattvas have always been happy to be preaching this scripture *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* .

“Every one of the millions of living beings who has been taught by these bodhisattvas has been reborn lifetime after lifetime in their company, has followed them listening to the teaching, has believed it and understood it. For this reason they have gotten to meet millions of enlightened beings, and this has not ended yet.

“Today I tell you that these sixteen novices, the disciples of the Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom, have now all attained ultimate perfect enlightenment, are teaching right now in lands throughout the cosmos, and have retinues of countless thousands and millions of bodhisattvas and seekers of salvation.

“Two of these novices have become buddhas in the East. One is called Immovable, and he is in the land called Joy. The second is called Summit of the Polar Mountain.

“Two are buddhas in the Southeast. One is called Lion’s Voice, and the other is called Lion’s Aspect.

“Two are buddhas in the South. One is called Dwelling in Emptiness, and the other is called Forever Extinguished.

“Two are buddhas in the Southwest. One is called Imperial Visage, and the other is called Divine Visage.

“Two are buddhas in the West. One is called Infinite Life (Amitabha), and the other is called Savior from All Worldly Affliction.

“Two are buddhas in the Northwest. One is called Fragrant Power, and the other is called Polar Mountain Aspect.

“Two are buddhas in the North. One is called Lord of the Clouds, and the other is called Sovereign King of the Clouds.

“In the Northeast there is a buddha called Destroyer of All Worldly Fears, and the other is the sixteenth buddha, I myself, Shakyamuni Buddha, who attained ultimate perfect enlightenment in this world, the world Endurance.”

[Shakyamuni Buddha continued:]

“When the sixteen of us were novices, we each taught countless millions of living beings, who followed us to hear the teaching, for the sake of ultimate perfect enlightenment.

“Of these living beings, right now some are still at the stage of disciples seeking personal salvation, and I am constantly trying to

teach them about ultimate perfect enlightenment. These people must, by means of this teaching, gradually enter upon the Path to Buddhahood.

“What is the reason for this? The wisdom of those who arrive at reality is hard to believe in and hard to understand.

“The countless living beings whom I taught in those times – you are these people, you and all those who will hear and follow the teaching in future generations after I am gone.

“After my demise, there will be some followers who do not hear this scripture, who will remain unaware of what bodhisattvas do. But because of the merit they have gained, they will conceive of the idea of nirvana and think: ‘I must enter nirvana, and then in another world I will become a buddha, and have another name.’

“Though these people have the idea of nirvana and entering nirvana, in another world they will seek the wisdom of the buddhas and get to hear this scripture. [Then they will find out that] nirvana is only attained by means of the Journey to Buddhahood, and there is no other journey, except for those journeys that the ones who have arrived at reality teach by way of expedient means.

“When those who have arrived at reality know that the time for their nirvana has arrived, and they know that their disciples are pure and clean, that they are firm in faith and understanding, that they have comprehended emptiness and entered deeply into meditative concentration – then they call together the bodhisattvas and seekers of personal salvation who have gathered around them, and then they set forth this scripture for them.

“In the world there is no other journey by which to attain nirvana: only by means of the one and only Journey to Buddhahood is nirvana attained.

“You must realize that in the expedient means they employ, those who arrive at reality have deeply penetrated into the nature of living beings. They understand that people are intent on lesser teachings, and enjoy them, and are deeply attached to the five desires. This is why, for the sake of such people, those who arrive at reality speak of nirvana, and when these people hear of it, they believe.

“Here is a metaphor.

“Suppose there is a long dangerous road, desolate and deserted. A multitude of people wishes to pass along this road to arrive at a place where there is a treasure.

“There is a guide, a teacher, who is intelligent and sagacious, who is well aware of all the twists and turns in this dangerous road, and who wants to guide this multitude past these dangers.

“Midway through the journey, the people the guide is leading get tired and want to turn back. They tell the guide: ‘We are completely exhausted, and frightened too, and we cannot go any further. The road ahead of us is still long, and we want to turn around and go home.’

“The guide knows a lot about expedient means, and thinks this: ‘How pitiable these people are. How can they want to turn back and abandon the great treasure?’

“Thinking this, halfway through the journey, the guide uses the power of expedient means, and by magic makes an illusory citadel appear. He tells the people: ‘Don’t be afraid. Here is this great citadel, where we can stop along the way, where you can do as you wish. If we go into this citadel, we will be safe. If you feel able to continue on ahead to where the treasure is, then we can go on.’

“Now the exhausted people feel joy and exclaim: ‘Now we can get off of this dangerous road, and quickly find safety.’ So they go ahead into the illusory citadel, thinking that they have been saved, and that they will be safe and secure.

“Now, the guide knows that after the people have stopped and rested, they will no longer be tired. [After the people are well rested] the guide makes the illusory citadel disappear and tells the people: ‘Come on, the treasure is near. The great citadel we were just in was something I conjured up, so you could stop and rest.’

[The Buddha continued:]

“As one who has arrived at reality, I too act like this. Now I am acting as your guide, and I well know just how long and dangerous the road of the afflictions of birth and death is, and I know that you must go along it and pass over it.

“If you only heard about the One Journey to Buddhahood, then you would not have wanted to meet the enlightened ones or to get close to them. You would be thinking: ‘The Path to Buddhahood is long, and we can only succeed on it by hard work and suffering.’

“As a buddha I know of this weak, cowardly state of mind, and I have used the power of expedient means to give you a place to stop

and rest along the way by speaking of the two kinds of nirvana [nirvana with a residue of attachment to the world, and nirvana without this residue].

“If living beings stop at the level of the two kinds of nirvana, then, as one who has arrived at reality, I explain to them: ‘You have not yet accomplished what you must do. The place where you have stopped is close to the wisdom of the enlightened ones.

“ ‘You must see that the nirvana that you have intended to attain is not truly real. It is just an artifact of the power of the skill in means of the ones who arrive at reality, who taught three journeys where really there is only the One Journey to Buddhahood.’ ”

“[In the metaphor] the guide conjured up the great citadel, so his followers could stop and rest. When he knew they were sufficiently rested, then he told them: ‘The place where the treasure is nearby. This citadel is not real. It is something I conjured up.’ ”

Then, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

The Buddha Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom
Sat at the site of enlightenment for ten eons,
But the reality of the enlightened ones did not appear before
him,
And he did not manage to consummate the Path to
Buddhahood.
A gathering of celestial beings and ocean spirit kings and
jealous gods and others
Sent down showers of celestial flowers constantly

As an offering to that buddha.

The celestial beings beat their heavenly drums and played
musical instruments.

Fragrant winds blew away the wilted blossoms, and fresh
ones rained down.

Only after ten eons had passed

Did Victory of Great Pervasive Wisdom at last complete the
Path to Buddhahood.

All the celestial beings and humans of that world were
ecstatic –

The sixteen sons of that buddha,

Surrounded by their retinues of millions of attendants,

Came together to the place where the Buddha was.

They bowed in homage at the feet of the Buddha,

And asked him to turn the Wheel of the Teaching:

“O Sagely Teacher, fill us and all beings with the rain of the
teaching.”

A World Honored One is hard to encounter –

One appears only in a very long time,

In order to bring enlightenment to the masses of living
beings,

And rouse everyone into action.

In the worlds of the East, in millions of lands,

The palaces of the Brahma Kings were filled with his light –

Something that had never happened before.

When the Brahma Kings saw this sign,
They came inquiring to the place where the Buddha was.
They scattered flowers as an offering to him,
And presented him with their palaces.
They asked the Buddha to turn the Wheel of the Teaching,
And offered verses of praise.
The Buddha knew that the right time had not yet arrived,
So he received their request and sat there in silence.
The same thing happened with the Brahma Kings of all the
other directions, of the zenith and the nadir –
They scattered flowers over the Buddha and offered him
their palaces,
Beseeching the Buddha to turn the Wheel of the Teaching:
“It is so hard to encounter a World Honored One!
Please show your great compassion,
And open wide the gate of sweet dew,
And turn the wheel of the Supreme Teaching.”
With infinite wisdom, the World Honored One
Accepted the requests of these multitudes of people,
And communicated various teachings to them –
The four noble truths, the twelve causal links.
“From ignorance to old age and death,
Everything comes from birth linked to imaginary existence:
All of you must understand these troubles.”

When the Buddha communicated these teachings,
Millions of beings reached the end of all suffering,
And they all became worthy ones.

When the Buddha taught for the second time,
Countless beings were no longer under the influence of
phenomena,

And they too became worthy ones.

As for those who by these means later found the path, they
were beyond counting –

Even if we counted for millions of eons,

We would not be able to count them all.

Then the sixteen royal sons [of the Buddha Victory of Great
Pervasive Wisdom]

Left home to become novice monks.

They all went together to ask that buddha

To set forth for them the teaching of the Great Journey:

“With our followers we will all attain the Path to
Buddhahood.

We vow to attain supreme purity of the eye of wisdom

Like yours, O World Honored One.”

The Buddha knew the minds of these young men –

He knew what they had done in previous lifetimes,

Using countless causal conditions and all kinds of
metaphors and explanations,

To teach the six ways of going beyond and the workings of
spiritual powers.

They offered analyses of the True Teaching,

And the Path practiced by the bodhisattvas.

They explained this sutra, the *Lotus of the Truth* , in
countless verses.

When the Buddha [who was their father] finished setting
forth the sutra,

And entered meditative concentration in a quiet room,

He sat with a unified mind,

In a single place for eighty-four thousand eons.

[His sons] the novice bodhisattvas knew that he would not
emerge from this concentration state,

So they taught the supreme wisdom of the enlightened ones
To countless millions of beings.

Each of the sixteen sons sat in the teacher's seat,

And taught this scripture of the Great Journey.

After the Buddha became quiescent,

They disseminated his message and helped in the teaching.

The living beings saved by each one of these novices
Numbered countless millions.

After that buddha passed away,

Those who had heard his teachings,

In buddha-lands everywhere,

Were born along with his sons as their teachers.

These sixteen novices traveled the Path to Buddhahood to
completion –

Now in the present, in lands throughout the cosmos,
They have all achieved correct enlightenment.

Those who listened to their teachings in those times
Are all now in the various places where these enlightened
ones are.

Some are at the level of seekers of salvation,
Being taught the Path to Buddhahood in gradual stages.

I was among these sixteen novices,
And I too have taught you.

That's why I use expedient means –
To draw you toward the wisdom of the buddhas.

Because of this basic causal nexus,
Today I am setting forth the sutra *Lotus of the Truth*
To enable you to enter the Path to Buddhahood.

Please don't be shocked or frightened!

[What seekers of enlightenment experience] is like this:

There was a dangerous road –

Remote, full of poisonous beasts, with no water or fodder,
A place that people fear.

A countless multitude of people wanted to travel by this
dangerous road.

The road was so desolate and long –
To travel it would take five hundred days.

There was a guide, intelligent and sagacious –
Clearly understanding [the travelers' plight],
He resolved to rescue them from the danger they were in.
The multitudes of travelers were all tired and exhausted,
So they said to the guide:

“We are overcome with fatigue, and we want to turn back
here.”

The guide thought: “What a pity for these people!
How can they want to turn back and lose out on the great
treasure?”

So he thought of an expedient means –
He employed his spiritual powers right there,
And conjured up a great citadel,
Splendidly arrayed with many houses and buildings,
Circled round with gardens and groves,
Full of men and women.

Having conjured up this apparition,
He soothed the travelers and told them not to give in to fear:
“Go into this citadel, and enjoy yourselves as you please.”

When the people went into the citadel, their minds were
filled with joy,

And they all felt at peace and secure,
And thought they were saved.

The guide knew they were now rested and refreshed,
So he called them together and told them:

“You must go forward – this is nothing but an illusory citadel.
I saw that you were completely exhausted
And wanted to turn back midway through the journey,
So I used the power of expedient means,
And temporarily conjured up this citadel.
If you try hard and advance,
You will all arrive together at the place where the treasure
is.”

I have been like this too, in acting as everyone’s guide –
I have seen that seekers of the Path get tired and give up
midway through the journey,
And are unable to cross over birth-and-death
And the perilous roads of affliction.
Therefore I have used the power of expedient means
And spoken to you of nirvana as a resting place.
I have told you that if you extinguish suffering,
Everything you have to do will have been accomplished.
Now that I see that you have arrived at nirvana,
And have all attained the station of worthy ones,
I have called you all together to tell you the True Teaching.
The buddhas with their powers of expedient means
Have made distinctions and taught the Three Journeys.
[In reality] there is only the One Journey to Buddhahood –
The buddhas spoke of other journeys to give you a resting
place.

Now I am telling you how things really are –
What you have attained is not nirvana.
You must put forth a great effort
For the all-knowledge of the enlightened ones.
When you experience all-knowledge, and the ten powers,
and the other phenomena of enlightenment –
When you have the thirty-two characteristics of the
enlightened ones –
Only then will it be real, genuine nirvana.
The enlightened ones, the guides,
Told you about nirvana to give you a resting place.
Now that I know you have rested,
I am leading you into the wisdom of the enlightened ones.

Chapter 8: Five Hundred Disciples Receive Predictions of Enlightenment

At that time, having heard the Buddha expound the teaching with wisdom and skill in means as appropriate for the occasion, and having heard the Buddha predict ultimate perfect enlightenment for all the great disciples, and having heard this story of the Buddha's past lifetimes, and having heard of the great sovereign spiritual powers possessed by the enlightened ones, [the Buddha's disciple] Purna Maitrayaniputra felt he was experiencing something unprecedented, and his mind was purified and overflowing with joy.

He rose from his seat and approached the Buddha and bowed at his feet. Then he stood off to one side, looking upon the face of the Buddha with a steady gaze, and thought this:

“How special the World Honored One is! How rare are his accomplishments! He adapts to the various kinds of living beings in the world, and uses this knowledge of skillful means to explain the teaching for them and remove their various attachments. We cannot express the merits of the Buddha. Only the Buddha, the World Honored One, can know the fundamental aspirations of our deepest minds.”

Then the Buddha said to the assembly:

“Do you see this man Purna Maitrayaniputra? I have often praised him as being the best of those who explain the teaching, and I have often praised his various merits. He has worked hard to protect and uphold and help spread my teaching. He is able to teach

monks and nuns and laymen and laywomen so that they profit from the teaching and take delight in it.

“He explains the True Teaching of the Buddha fully, and brings great benefits to those with whom he practices pure conduct. Apart from those who have arrived at reality, no one can fully do justice to the elegance of the theories [of the True Teaching].

“You should not imagine that Purna has only been able to protect and uphold and help spread my teaching. He has also protected and upheld and helped to spread the true teachings of the enlightened ones while accompanying nine billion buddhas in the past, and he served them as the foremost expounder of the teachings.

“In regard to the teaching of emptiness set forth by these buddhas, he has comprehended it clearly and mastered it fully, and achieved the four forms of unobstructed knowledge – [unobstructed in regard to the teaching itself, its meanings, its forms of expression, and its joyful eloquence].

“He has always been able to express the teaching with complete accuracy and purity, without doubt or confusion, with the full force of the spiritual powers of the bodhisattvas.

“For as long as he lived [in each lifetime], he always cultivated pure conduct, and the people in those worlds where those buddhas were teaching all regarded him as a true follower of the teaching.

“Purna has used these expedient means to bring benefits to countless hundreds of thousands of living beings, and he has taught and transformed countless people, enabling them to go toward

ultimate perfect enlightenment. He has constantly worked at the mission of the enlightened ones and taught living beings, in order to purify the worlds where those enlightened ones were active.

“Purna was also the foremost among those who explained the teachings of the most recent seven buddhas, and now he is also the foremost among those who explain my teachings, and he will also be the foremost among those who explain the teachings of the buddhas who are yet to come in this eon. He has protected and upheld and helped spread the teachings of all these enlightened ones.

“Moreover, in future ages, he will protect and uphold and help spread the teachings of countless numbers of enlightened ones. He will teach and transform and bring benefits to countless living beings, and enable them to aspire to ultimate perfect enlightenment. In order to purify their buddha-lands, he will always work hard to dedicate his energies to teaching living beings, until he gradually completes the bodhisattva path.

“After countless trackless eons, here in this land, he will achieve ultimate perfect enlightenment. He will be called Clear Light of the Teaching, one who has arrived at reality, one worthy of support, with true all-encompassing knowledge, with enlightened conduct, excellent, liberated from worldly concerns, a peerless being, a great guide, a teacher of celestial beings and humans, a buddha, a world honored one.

“This enlightened being will make a single buddha-land of the worlds of countless galaxies, with the ground made of the seven precious jewels, level as the palm of a hand, without mountains or hills or gullies or ravines. This buddha-land will be filled with

observation platforms made of the seven jewels, with celestial palaces everywhere near at hand, open, where humans and divine beings can intermingle and get to meet each other. There will be no evil planes of existence, and all living beings will be born by magical transformation, without lustful desires.

“This enlightened being will achieve great spiritual powers, and his body will emit light, and he will fly free. His intent will be strong and solid and will advance with wisdom. He will be golden-colored and adorned with the thirty-two marks of a buddha.

“The inhabitants of his land will constantly partake of two meals: one of joy in truth, and the second of delight in meditation.

“There will be a multitude of countless millions of bodhisattvas, with great spiritual power and the four forms of unobstructed wisdom, skilled at teaching and transforming the various sorts of living beings.

“There will be a multitude of seekers of salvation whose numbers are beyond counting, who will all become complete with the six spiritual powers and the three forms of illumination and the eight forms of liberation.

“His buddha-land will be formed like this with the adornments of countless merits. His era will be named Precious Light, and his land will be named Good and Pure. This buddha’s lifespan will be countless eons, and his teaching will endure for a long time. When this buddha dies, memorial towers made of the seven precious jewels will fill his land.”

Then, to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

Listen carefully everyone!

The path traveled by the children of the buddhas

Cannot be conceptualized or categorized.

Because they have all learned skill in means,

They know that living beings like lesser teachings

And are afraid of great wisdom –

This is why the bodhisattvas take on the form

Of disciples seeking personal salvation

And illuminate contemplating interdependent causation,

Using countless expedient means

To teach the various kinds of living beings.

They claim to be disciples seeking personal salvation,

Far from the Path to Buddhahood,

To bring salvation to countless beings,

So that they all can succeed [in finding enlightenment].

Though these beings are lazy and have low aspirations,

Little by little they will be enabled to become buddhas.

Inwardly, in secret, these children of the buddhas are

working as bodhisattvas –

Outwardly, they appear to be disciples seeking personal

salvation

Who reduce desires and are averse to birth-and-death.

In reality, they are purifying the buddha-land.
They teach the multitudes about the three poisons
[ignorance, anger, greed]
And display signs of the misguided views [in which their
audiences believe].
My disciples act like this, using skill in means to rescue
living beings.
If I taught the full truth in all its manifestations,
The beings who heard this would be full of doubts and
confusion.
The one who is now this person Purna
In the past diligently cultivated the path practiced by billions
of buddhas.
He spread and protected the teachings of the buddhas.
To seek the highest wisdom, he appeared where the
buddhas were,
In the guise of a leader of their disciples, learned and wise.
In what he taught, he was fearless –
He brought joy to the multitudes.
He was never fatigued or discouraged –
Thus he helped in the work of the buddhas.
He had already crossed into the realm of great spiritual
powers –
He possessed the four kinds of unobstructed knowledge.
He recognized the sharp and dull faculties [of his listeners]

And always spoke the pure teaching.
He expounded this truth and taught millions,
Enabling them to abide in the teaching of the Great Journey,
While he himself purified the buddha-land.
In the future he will also serve countless buddhas,
Protecting the True Teaching and helping to communicate it,
While he himself purified the buddha-land.
He always used various expedient means
And taught without fear.
He brought countless numbers of beings
To the attainment of all-knowledge.
He served the ones who arrive at reality
And protected and preserved the precious treasury of the
Teaching.
Later, when he achieves buddhahood,
He will be called Clear Light of the Teaching.
His land will be named Good and Pure,
And it will be made out of the seven precious jewels.
His era will be named Precious Light.
There will be a profusion of bodhisattvas –
Countless millions, all having attained great spiritual
powers.
Fully equipped with the power of awe-inspiring virtue –
They will fill his land.

Disciples seeking salvation will also be countless,
With the three illuminations and the eight liberations,
And the four forms of unobstructed knowledge –
The communities of seekers will be made up of such as
these.

The living beings in his land will have cut off lust,
And be born purely by transformation.
Provided with bodies adorned in all ways,
They will subsist on delight in the teaching and pleasure in
meditation

And have no thought of other food.

There will be no inferior people,
And no beings in the evil planes of existence.

The merits of the monk Purna are all complete –
He will surely attain this pure land,
Full of the virtuous and wise.

Such wonders will be countless –
I am just telling the story in brief.

At that time, the twelve hundred worthy ones [in the audience],
whose minds were free, thought this: “We are happy to learn
something we have never known before. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if
the World Honored One would give predictions of enlightenment for
the other great disciples!”

The World Honored One knew what they were thinking, and so
he said to Mahakashyapa:

“Right here and now, one after another, I am going to give these twelve hundred worthy ones predictions of their ultimate complete enlightenment.

“My great disciple, the monk Kaundinya, who is here today in this assembly, will go on to serve billions of buddhas, and afterwards he will achieve buddhahood. He will be called Universal Illumination, one who has arrived at reality, one worthy of support, with true all-encompassing knowledge, with enlightened conduct, excellent, liberated from worldly concerns, a peerless being, a great guide, a teacher of celestial beings and humans, a buddha, a world honored one.

“Five hundred of these worthy ones, including Uruvilvakashyapa, Gayakashyapa, Nadikashyapa, Kalodayin, Udayin, Anirudda, Revata, Kapphina, Bakkula, Chunda, Svagata, and others, will all attain ultimate complete enlightenment and will all share the same name, Universal Illumination.”

Then, to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

Kaundinya the monk will meet countless buddhas –
He will pass through trackless eons
And finally achieve true awakening.
Then he will always emit a great light
And be fully equipped with spiritual powers.
His renown will extend through the worlds of the ten
directions,
And all will venerate him.

He will constantly teach the Supreme Path,
So his name will be Universal Illumination.
His land will be pure and clean,
With the bodhisattvas there brave and bold –
Ascending wondrous towers,
Traveling through the lands of the ten directions,
Presenting peerless offerings to the enlightened ones.
After making these offerings,
With minds filled with great joy,
They will return instantaneously to their homelands –
Such will be the spiritual powers they possess.
The lifespan of the Buddha Universal Illumination will be
sixty thousand eons.
His true teaching will last twice as long as his lifespan,
And the semblance of his teaching, twice as long as that.
When his teaching ends, celestial beings and humans will
mourn.
These five hundred monks will become buddhas in turn,
And will share the name Universal Illumination –
So I give them predictions of enlightenment one after
another.
After the demise of one, the next one will become a buddha.
The world that he teaches will be like mine today.
The splendor and purity of their lands,
The force of their spiritual powers,

Their multitudes of bodhisattvas and seekers,
The period of their true teaching,
The period of the semblance of their teaching,
Their lifespans,
Will all be as I have just said.

Mahakashyapa, you already know
It will also be like this for
These five hundred free beings
And all the rest of the assembly of seekers.
You should spread the message
To those who are not present here at this assembly.

Then, after the five hundred worthy ones had received this prediction of enlightenment in the presence of the Buddha, they were overjoyed, and got up from their seats and bowed at the foot of the Buddha.

Regretting their past errors, they took themselves to task:

“O World Honored One! We always used to think that we had already attained ultimate nirvana, but now we finally realize that we were behaving like ignorant fools. Why is this? We ought to have been striving for the wisdom of those who arrive at reality, but instead we thought our petty wisdom was sufficient.

“Here is a metaphor [for how we have behaved.]

“A man got drunk and passed out at his close friend’s house. The close friend had official business to take care of, and he left a

purse containing a priceless pearl with the drunken man and went off. The man lying there dead drunk knew nothing about it.

“Later on, when he came to, he got up and traveled off to another country. He worked hard to earn money for food and clothing, and endured great hardships. If he had had any idea of what he had obtained from his friend, he would have had plenty.

“Later on his close friend happened to meet him, and when he saw him he said:

“ ‘What a travesty! How did you get yourself into such a fix, just for the sake of food and clothing? I wanted to make you secure and happy and able to do whatever you want, so that day I gave you a purse containing a priceless pearl.

“ ‘From then until now, you have not realized this. You work hard and worry and suffer, as you try to make a living. You are really stupid! Right now you could take this pearl and trade it for the things you need, and always get what you want, and you would never lack for anything.’

“It is also this way with the Buddha. When he was a bodhisattva, he taught us and enabled us to develop the aspiration for all-knowledge. But we neglected it and forgot all about it, and acted as if we knew nothing.

“Once we found the path of the worthy ones, we thought this was nirvana. We used this to support ourselves, and suffered hardship – we got a little bit, and thought this was enough.

“Yet our wish for all-knowledge was still there and hadn’t been lost. Today you awakened us when you said: ‘Monks, what you have

attained is not ultimate nirvana. Over a long period I have enabled you to plant the good roots of buddhahood. Using expedient means, I taught you the characteristics of nirvana, and you imagined that you had really attained nirvana.'

"O World Honored One! Today we finally realize that, in fact, it is as bodhisattvas that we get to receive the prediction of ultimate complete enlightenment. For this reason, we are overjoyed, and we are experiencing what we have never experienced before."

Then, to reiterate this meaning, Ajnata Kaundinya spoke a verse:

We have heard the unsurpassed sound of the Buddha's
peaceful voice

Giving us predictions of enlightenment.

Our joy is as never before,

As we bow in homage to the Buddha with his infinite
wisdom.

Here in the presence of the World Honored One,
We regret our mistakes.

Of the infinite treasure of the enlightened ones,
We got a small share of nirvana.

Like ignorant fools, we thought this was enough.

We were like the poor destitute man

Who went to visit the home of a close friend.

The household was very rich,

And all sorts of delicacies were placed before him.

His friend took a priceless pearl, put it in a cloth purse,
And gave it to him without saying anything,
Then left him and went away.

The poor man lying there knew nothing about it.
When he awoke, he went off to visit another country,
Looking for food and clothing to provide for himself.
It was very hard to make a living –
He got a little and thought it was enough,
And wished no more for something better.

He was not aware that inside the cloth purse there was a
priceless pearl.

Later, the friend who had given him the pearl met this poor
man –

After rebuking him, he showed him the pearl wrapped in the
cloth.

When the poor man saw the pearl,
His mind was filled with joy –
Now he possessed all wealth in abundance
And could do whatever he wished.
We too have behaved like this!

In our eternal night, the World Honored One
Always took pity on us and tried to teach us
So we could plant the seeds of the highest aspiration.
Because we were ignorant, we didn't realize this –
We got a small share of nirvana,

And thought it was enough, and did not search for more.
Now the Buddha has awakened us,
Telling us that what we attained is not real nirvana.
Only when the supreme wisdom of the enlightened ones is
 attained
Is this then true nirvana.
Today we have heard from the Buddha
Predictions of enlightenment, with all its adornments.
When each of us in turn receives the decisive experience,
Our bodies and minds will be filled with joy.

Chapter 9: Predictions of Enlightenment

At that time, Ananda and Rahula thought to themselves: “We have often thought how happy we would be if we were to receive predictions of enlightenment.”

They arose from their seats, went in front of the Buddha, and said this to him:

“World Honored One, we too must have a share in this. As one who has arrived at reality, you are our only resort. We are regarded as knowledgeable by everyone in the world – celestial beings, humans, jealous spirits. Ananda is the Buddha’s constant companion, who guards the treasure of the teachings. Rahula is the Buddha’s son.

“If you were to give us predictions of enlightenment, our wishes would be fulfilled, and our hopes satisfied.”

Then two thousand disciples, seekers in the stage of study, and those beyond the stage of study, all rose from their seats, bared their right shoulders, and went before the Buddha. With one mind, they joined their palms together in salute and looked up at the World Honored One. They spoke in accordance with the wish expressed by Ananda and Rahula, then stood off to one side.

Then the Buddha told Ananda:

“In a future life you will become a buddha, and you will be called Sovereign of the Wisdom of the Mountains and Seas, one who has arrived at reality, one worthy of support, of true all-encompassing knowledge, of enlightened conduct, righteous,

liberated from the world, a peerless being, a master guide, a teacher of celestial beings and humans, a buddha, a world honored one.

“You will serve sixty-two hundred million buddhas and protect and uphold the treasures of their teachings, and after that you will achieve ultimate complete enlightenment.

“You will teach and transform countless millions of bodhisattvas and enable them to achieve ultimate complete enlightenment.

“Your land will be called Constantly Planting the Banner of Victory, and it will be pure and clean, with the ground made of crystal. Your era will be call Wondrous Sound Pervading All.

“Your lifespan as a buddha will be countless millions of trackless eons, such that even if someone tried for countless millions of trackless eons to calculate it, he still could not determine it. The period of your true teaching will endure twice the length of your lifespan, and the period of the semblance of your teaching will last twice that long.

“I tell you Ananda, this Buddha Sovereign of the Wisdom of the Mountains and Seas will be acclaimed by countless millions of enlightened beings who have arrived at reality in all the worlds of the ten directions, and they will celebrate his merits.”

Then, to reiterate this meaning, the Buddha spoke a verse:

Today in this community of monks I say:

Ananda, upholder of the teaching,

Will serve many buddhas,

And after that he will achieve true awakening.

His name will be Sovereign of the Wisdom of the Mountains
and Seas.

His land will be pure and clear –

It will be called Constantly Planting the Banner of Victory.

He will teach bodhisattvas beyond number.

As a buddha he will have great awe-inspiring virtues,

And his name will be known in all the worlds of the ten
directions.

His lifespan will be measureless –

He will show mercy to living beings,

So his correct teaching will last twice as long as his lifespan,

And the semblance of his teaching will last twice as long as
that.

Innumerable living beings, countless as the sands,

Will plant the causal basis for the Path to Buddhahood

In this teaching of enlightenment.

At that time, eight thousand bodhisattvas who had newly
generated the aspiration for enlightenment formed this thought:

“We still have not heard the great bodhisattvas receive such a
prediction of enlightenment. Why is it that these mere disciples have
gotten this definitive prediction?”

The World Honored One knew what these bodhisattvas were
thinking, and he said to them:

“Good people! I was with Ananda and the others in the
presence of the Buddha King of Emptiness, and we all developed

the aspiration for ultimate complete enlightenment at the same time.

“Ananda was always fond of learning, and I always worked hard to make spiritual progress. That is why I have already achieved ultimate complete enlightenment, while Ananda protects and upholds my teachings, and will continue to protect the treasury of the teachings of the buddhas of the future, teaching and completing the development of a multitude of bodhisattvas.

“This has been his fundamental aspiration, and that is why he has received this prediction of enlightenment.”

Standing before the Buddha, Ananda heard the prediction of his enlightenment and heard about the adornments of the land that would be his when he was a buddha. Hearing that what he aspired to would be fully accomplished, he felt a great joy, experiencing something he had never experienced before.

At that moment, he remembered all the treasuries of teachings of countless past buddhas, and comprehended them all, without obstruction, as if he were hearing them right now, and he recognized their fundamental intent.

Then Ananda spoke a verse:

What a rare marvel!

The World Honored One has made me remember

The teachings of countless buddhas of the past,

As if I were hearing them right now.

At this moment I have no more doubts,

And I dwell in peace in the Buddha Path.

As an expedient I serve as a companion,
Preserving and protecting the teachings of the buddhas.

Then the Buddha said to Rahula:

“In future lifetimes you will become a buddha, and you will be called Walking on Jewel Flowers, one who has arrived at reality, one worthy of support, of true all-encompassing knowledge, of enlightened conduct, righteous, liberated from the world, a peerless being, a master guide, a teacher of celestial beings and humans, a buddha, a world honored one.

“You will serve buddhas, beings who have arrived at reality, as numerous as the atoms in ten worlds, and you will always be the eldest son of these buddhas, as you are to me right now.

“This Buddha Walking on Jewel Flowers will have a land that is beautifully adorned. He will be no different from the Buddha Sovereign of the Wisdom of the Mountains and Seas in terms of his lifespan, the number of disciples he teaches, and the duration of the eras of his true teaching, and of the semblance of his teaching. He will also be the eldest son of that buddha, and after that, he will attain ultimate complete enlightenment.”

Then, to reiterate this meaning, the Buddha spoke a verse:

When I was a prince,
Rahula was my son.

Now that I have consummated the Path to Buddhahood,
He has accepted the teaching and become my son in the
teaching.

In future lifetimes, he will meet countless millions of
buddhas

And be the eldest son of all of them,

Single-mindedly seeking the Path to Buddhahood.

Only I can know Rahula's esoteric practices –

He appears as my eldest son

In order to teach living beings.

His myriad merits are beyond counting –

He dwells at peace in the teaching of the enlightened ones

Seeking the Supreme Path.

At that time, the World Honored One looked out over the assembly and saw those who were still learning and those who had gone beyond learning, two thousand people in all. Mild, silent, pure, they were single-mindedly looking at the Buddha.

The Buddha said to Ananda: “Do you see these two thousand people still in the process of learning and those beyond the stage of learning?”

Ananda replied: “Yes, I see them.”

The Buddha said: “They will serve buddhas, beings who have arrived at reality, as numerous as the atoms in fifty worlds, respect them and honor them, and protect and uphold the treasury of their teachings.

“Finally in the various lands of the ten directions they will simultaneously achieve buddhahood. They will all share the same name, Precious Aspect, and they will be called beings who have

arrived at reality, worthy of support, of true all-encompassing knowledge, of enlightened conduct, righteous, liberated from the world, peerless beings, master guides, teachers of celestial beings and humans, buddhas, world honored ones.

“Their lifespans will be one eon. They will all be equal in terms of the adornments of their lands, the numbers of disciples and bodhisattvas they teach, and the duration of the periods of their true teaching and the semblance of their teachings.”

Then, to reiterate this meaning, the Buddha spoke a verse:

To these two thousand disciples now standing before me,
I give a prediction of enlightenment –

In the future they will become buddhas!

The buddhas whom they will serve

Are as numerous as atoms, as I have just said.

They will protect and uphold the treasury of their teachings,

And later they themselves will achieve true enlightenment.

Living in various different worlds of the ten directions,

They will all have the same name.

They will all sit simultaneously at their sites of enlightenment

And realize supreme wisdom.

They will all be called Precious Aspect.

There will be no difference in their lands,

In the numbers of disciples they teach,

In the duration of their true teachings and the semblance of
their teachings.

All of them will employ their spiritual powers
To deliver living beings in the worlds of the ten directions.
Their reputations will spread everywhere,
And gradually they will enter nirvana.

At that moment, the two thousand people who were still
learning and who were beyond the stage of learning heard the
Buddha giving them a prediction of enlightenment and felt overjoyed.
They spoke a verse:

The Buddha's lamp of wisdom shines bright!
As we hear him predicting our enlightenment,
Our hearts are filled with joy,
As though we were being anointed with sweet dew.

Chapter 10: Teachers

At that time, the World Honored One spoke to eighty thousand great beings via the bodhisattva Medicine King:

“Medicine King, in this great assembly you see countless numbers of celestial beings, kings of the ocean spirits, earth spirits and celestial musicians, jealous spirits and loving spirits and spirits of eternal time, humans and nonhumans, along with monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, people seeking personal salvation, people seeking solitary illumination, people seeking the Path to Buddhahood.

“All these types of beings have come into the presence of the Buddha, and if they hear a verse or a line of the sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* , or even take joy in it for a moment, I predict enlightenment for them all. They all will attain ultimate complete enlightenment.”

The Buddha also told Medicine King: “Moreover, after my demise, if there are any who hear a verse or a line of the sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* , or even take joy in it for a moment, I also predict that they will attain ultimate complete enlightenment.

“And if there are people who accept and uphold this sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* , read and recite it, and know how to explain it, or who write it out, even a single verse of it, if they look upon this sutra as if they were seeing a buddha, and make offerings to it of flowers, incense, garlands, canopies, banners, garments, musical instruments, if they even join their palms together to salute it – you must understand that these people have already served thousands

of millions of buddhas and have achieved the great aspiration for enlightenment with these buddhas, and because they have felt compassion for living beings, they have been born in this human world.

“Medicine King, if someone asks you what sort of people will become buddhas in future lifetimes, you must explain to them that all the people who do these things are sure to become buddhas in future lifetimes.

“Why is this? If good men or good women accept and uphold even one line of this sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* , read and recite it, know how to explain it, or record it, if they make offerings to it of flowers, incense, garlands, canopies, banners, garments, musical instruments, if they even join their palms together to salute it – these people will be admired and served in all worlds, and will be supported as those enlightened beings who arrive at reality are supported.

“You must understand that these people are great bodhisattvas. They will achieve ultimate complete enlightenment, have compassion for living beings, and vow to be born among them in order to disseminate and explain the sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* . How much the more so for those people who can fully accept and uphold the sutra and serve it in various ways.

“Medicine King, you must understand that these people have relinquished the rewards for their pure actions and, out of compassion for living beings, will be born in this evil world after my demise, in order to disseminate this sutra more widely.

“After I am dead, if these good men and good women are able to explain even a single line of this sutra to a single person, even covertly, you must realize that they are acting as the deputies of the ones who arrive at reality, they have been dispatched by the ones who arrive at reality, and they are carrying out the work of the ones who arrive at reality. How much the more so if they can explain the sutra to large audiences of people!

“If evil people were to slander the enlightened ones constantly out of malevolence for an entire eon, their crime would not be as serious as the crime of people who speak one evil word against householders or monastics who are reciting the sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth*.

“Medicine King, you must understand that the people who recite the sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* are outfitting themselves with the adornments of the enlightened ones, and they are undertaking a duty on behalf of the ones who arrive at reality.

“Wherever they go, people should follow along and pay homage and wholeheartedly salute them and respect them and support them, honor them and praise them. People should offer them flowers, incense, garlands, canopies, banners, garments, delicious foods, and music, all the high-quality offerings made among humans. People should scatter heavenly jewels in their path and offer them clusters of celestial gems.

“Why? Because these people take delight in explaining the True Teaching, and the instant someone hears it, that person can attain ultimate complete enlightenment.”

Then, to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

If you want to stand on the Path of Enlightenment,
And achieve spontaneous wisdom,
You must always work hard to serve
Those who accept and uphold the *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth*.

If you want to attain all-knowledge quickly,
You must accept and uphold this sutra
And serve those who uphold it.

If people can accept and uphold this sutra
Lotus of the Wondrous Truth,

They put aside the pure lands [which their actions have
earned them]

And, out of compassion for living beings, are born here.
You must realize that people such as these
Are free to be born wherever they wish.

They are able to set forth the supreme teaching on a wide
scale.

In the midst of this evil world,
You should make offerings to those who spread the
teaching –

With celestial flowers and incense,
With heavenly garments adorned with jewels,
With clusters of the rarest gems in heaven.

Those who are capable of upholding this sutra,
In this evil world after I am dead,
Should be saluted and honored,
As if you were making offerings to me.
Give them the finest delicacies, sweet and fair,
And all sorts of garments.
Support these children of the Buddha
In the hope that you might hear a moment of their teaching.
Those who in future lifetimes
Are able to accept and uphold this sutra,
I send as my deputies among humans,
To carry out the work of the ones who arrive at reality.
Someone who, out of constant malevolence,
Slandered the buddhas over an entire eon
Would be guilty of an immeasurably grave wrongdoing –
Anyone who denounces those who recite and uphold
This sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth*
Commits a sin worse than this.
Some people seek the Path to Buddhahood,
And stand before me offering salutations for a whole eon,
And praise me with countless verses –
They gain immeasurable merit from praising a buddha.
But those who praise this sutra and uphold it
Gain even more blessings.

If someone made offerings to those who uphold this sutra
With all the most wondrous sense objects –
Colors, sounds, scents, flavors, textures –
For eighty billions eons,
And after doing this, for a single instant,
Got to hear the sutra –
This person would congratulate himself,
And say, “Today I have really gained something!”
I tell you now, Medicine King,
Among all the sutras that I have spoken,
This *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* is supreme.

Then the Buddha said to the bodhisattva Medicine King: “The sutras I expound are countless – those I have expounded, the ones I am expounding now, the ones I will expound. But among them all, this *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* is the hardest to believe and the hardest to understand.

“This sutra is the secret essential treasury of all the enlightened ones. It cannot be given out to people falsely. It is preserved and protected by all the enlightened ones, and since ancient times, none of them has ever openly expounded it. Even now, with me still in the world as one who has arrived at reality, there are still many who hate it – this will be even worse after I am gone.

“Medicine King, you must realize that after my demise, those who write down the *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth*, memorize it, read it, chant it, or make offerings to support it, or preach it to others, will be under the protective mantle of the ones who arrive at reality and

will be remembered and protected by the present enlightened ones in other regions.

“These people will have the power of great certainty, and the power of their aspirations, and the power of good roots. You must understand that these people will dwell with the ones who arrive at reality, and the ones who arrive at reality will lay their hands on their heads.

“This *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* will be preached everywhere, will be read everywhere, will be chanted everywhere, will be written down everywhere.

“Wherever a copy of the sutra is present, memorial towers made of the seven jewels must be raised and made tall and broad and magnificently adorned. No relics need to be placed there. Why so? In this sutra the whole body of those who arrive at reality is already present. These memorial towers should be regaled with all sorts of flowers and incense, garlands, canopies, banners, music and song – they should be supported and respected, honored and praised.

“If there are people who see these memorial towers, bow to them and make offerings, you should know that these people are all headed for ultimate complete enlightenment.

“Medicine King, there are many people, both householders and monastics, who are traveling the bodhisattva path, but who will not travel it skillfully if they do not get to read, hear, recite, write down, or memorize this sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* . Only when they get to hear this sutra will they be able to travel the bodhisattva path skillfully.

“You should realize that if people seeking the Path to Buddhahood get to read or hear this sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* , and if, having heard it, they believe in it and understand it and accept it and uphold it, they will be able to approach ultimate complete enlightenment.

“Here is a metaphor. A man was suffering from thirst and needed water. He dug down on a high plain, looking for water, but all he saw [where he was digging] was dry dirt, and he knew the water was still far away. He kept working, and then he saw some moist earth, and gradually he came to some mud, and he knew for sure that water was near.

“It is the same with bodhisattvas. As long as they have not heard or understood or been able to cultivate this sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* , they are still far away from ultimate complete enlightenment. But if they get to hear it and understand it, contemplate it and cultivate it, they should know that they are going to be headed for ultimate complete enlightenment.

“Why is this? The ultimate complete enlightenment of all bodhisattvas belongs to this sutra – this sutra opens the gate of expedient means and reveals true reality.

“The treasury of this sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* is so deep and solid and abstruse and far-reaching, and no one can reach it [unaided], and now the Buddha is revealing it to teach and transform bodhisattvas and enable them to develop fully.

“If a bodhisattva hears this sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* and is perplexed or frightened, we know that this is a bodhisattva who has newly developed the aspiration for enlightenment. If a

seeker of personal salvation hears this sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* and is perplexed or frightened, we know that this seeker is suffering from excessive arrogance.

“If, after my death, there are good men and good women who want to teach this sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* , how should they teach it?

“They should teach this sutra only when they have entered the room of the ones who have arrived at reality, put on the robe of the ones who have arrived at reality, and sat in the seat of the ones who have arrived at reality.

“The room of the ones who have arrived at reality is the mind of great compassion for all living beings.

“The robe of the ones who have arrived at reality is the mind of kindness and patience.

“The seat of the ones who have arrived at reality is the emptiness of all phenomena.

“Once good men and good women are secure in these, then they can teach this sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* with a tireless mind on a wide scale to bodhisattvas and lay people and monastics.

“Medicine King, I have sent people conjured up by magic to gather together audiences to hear the teaching, and I have also sent monks and nuns and laymen and laywomen conjured up by magic to listen to them explain the teaching. All these people who have been conjured up listen to the teaching, believe it and accept it and follow it without turning against it.

“If those explaining the teaching are in an empty place, I immediately send them celestial beings and ocean spirits and earth spirits and celestial musicians and jealous spirits, and so on, to listen to them explaining the teaching.

“Even if I am in another land, I always enable those who are explaining the teaching to see my body. If they happen to pause because they have forgotten a line of this sutra, I come back and tell it to them, so that they can complete it fully.”

Then, to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

If you want to get rid of all your laziness,
You must listen to this sutra.
It is hard to get to hear this sutra,
And even harder to believe it and accept it.
You are like thirsty people who need water,
So you start drilling down on a high plain.
While you see that the earth is dry,
You know that you are still far away from water.
But when you gradually come to see the wet earth and the
mud,
You are sure that you are getting close to water.
Medicine King, you must understand this –
As long as all these people
Have not yet heard this sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* ,
They are still far away from the wisdom of the buddhas.

If they hear this profound sutra,
They will understand the teaching for disciples.
If they have heard this, the king of all the sutras,
And they ponder it truly –
You must understand that these people
Are moving closer to the wisdom of the buddhas.
Those who teach this sutra
Must enter the room of the ones who have arrived at reality,
Put on the robe of the ones who have arrived at reality,
Sit in the seat of the ones who have arrived at reality,
So they can go among the multitudes without fear
And explain the teaching on a wide scale.
Great compassion is the room –
The mind of kindness and patience is the robe –
The emptiness of all phenomena is the seat –
This is where you must be to explain the teaching.
If there are people who revile you
When you set forth this sutra,
If they attack you and batter you,
You are mindful of the buddhas, so you must be forbearing.
I have manifested a pure and strong body
In hundreds of millions of lands.
I have explained the teaching for living beings
Over countless millions of eons.

To those who are able to set forth this sutra after my
demise,
I will send forth monks and nuns and laymen and laywomen
of pure faith,
Conjured up by magic,
To support these teachers.
They will lead and guide living beings,
Gather them together and make them listen to the teaching.
If there are people who want to increase evil,
And they attack these teachers with sticks and stones,
Then I will send beings conjured up by magic
To act as their guardians and protectors.
If those teaching are all alone in empty places,
Deserted and still, without the sounds of human voices,
When they recite this sutra,
I will appear to them in a body of pure clear light.
If they forget a passage or a phrase,
I will tell it to them and make them fluent.
If people have this merit,
Whether they are setting forth the sutra to the multitudes,
Or reciting it in an uninhabited place,
They will all get to see my body.
If they are in an empty place,
I will send celestial beings and kings of the ocean spirits,

Earth spirits and demons

To be the audience listening to the teaching.

Such people enjoy setting forth the teaching,

Giving clear explanations without hindrance.

Because they are protected by the buddhas,

They can make the great multitudes happy.

If you get close to these teachers,

You will quickly find the bodhisattva path.

If you go along with these teachers and learn from them,

You will get to see countless buddhas.

Chapter 11: The Appearance of the Jeweled Tower

At that moment a huge tower made of jewels surged up out of the ground in front of the Buddha and stood there hovering in midair. It was five thousand miles high and twenty-five hundred miles around and decorated with all sorts of precious things.

The tower had five thousand balustrades and thousands of niches and chambers and was adorned with countless flags and streamers. It was hung with garlands of jewels and millions of jewel bells. The tower emitted the rare scent of precious perfumes in all directions, which filled the world. Its banners and canopies were made of the seven precious substances – gold, silver, lapis lazuli, seashell, agate, pearl, and carnelian – and reached as high as the palaces of the four heavenly kings.

From the highest heaven in the world of form, celestial flowers rained down as an offering to the jeweled tower. All the other celestial beings and ocean spirits, earth spirits and celestial musicians, jealous spirits and loving spirits and spirits of eternal time, humans and nonhumans – a multitude numbering in the billions – made offerings to the jeweled tower of various kinds of flowers, incense, necklaces, banners and canopies and musical instruments, offering their respects to the jeweled tower, honoring it and praising it.

At that moment a great voice issued forth from within the jeweled tower and proclaimed:

“How excellent you are, Shakyamuni, the World Honored One! How good it is that you have been able to use the great omnipresent wisdom to communicate the bodhisattva teaching, protected by the enlightened ones – the sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* – to such a large assembly! It is as you have spoken it. All that you have said is the actual truth.”

As they saw the great jeweled tower standing there in midair, and heard the great voice coming forth from the tower, the whole assembly – monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen – all experienced the joy of truth and marveled at this unprecedented event. They rose from their seats, and offered their respects, joining their palms in salute, and then stood off to the side.

Then the bodhisattva Great Joy Teaching, knowing the doubts in the minds of all the celestial beings and humans and jealous spirits and the other beings in the assembly, said to the Buddha:

“World Honored One, what is the reason that this jeweled tower rose up out of the ground and this voice came forth from within it?”

Then the Buddha told the bodhisattva Great Joy Teaching:

“Inside this great jeweled tower is the intact body of one who arrived at reality. In the past, toward the east, beyond countless millions of worlds, there was a land called Jewel Purity, and in that land there was a buddha called Many Jewels.

“When that buddha was traveling the bodhisattva path, he made a great vow, saying: ‘If I become a buddha, after my death, if there is anyone in the ten directions who sets forth the sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth*, when I hear this sutra, my memorial tower will

surge up and appear before that person, to attest to its truth, and I will salute that person, saying, “Excellent, well done!” ’

“After that Buddha Many Jewels achieved enlightenment, when he was about to die, he told a great assembly of celestial beings and humans: ‘After my demise, if you want to make an offering to my body, you should build a great tower.’

“So it is that, everywhere in all the lands of the ten directions, if anyone sets forth the sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* , the jeweled tower of the Buddha Many Jewels surges forth, by means of his spiritual powers and the power of his vow, and from the intact body within the tower, he salutes the person setting forth the *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* by saying, ‘Excellent, well done!’ ”

Then the bodhisattva Great Joy Teaching, by means of the spiritual powers of those who arrive at reality, said to the Buddha: “We would like to see the body of this buddha.”

The Buddha [Shakyamuni] said to the bodhisattva Great Joy Teaching: “The Buddha Many Jewels made a profound vow: ‘If my jeweled tower appears in the presence of a buddha because I hear the sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* , and this buddha wants to show my body to the audience listening to the sutra, then all the buddhas who are emanations of this buddha and are teaching in the worlds of the ten directions must return and gather together in one place, and then my body will appear.’

“Now all the buddhas that are my emanations who are in the worlds of the ten directions will gather together.”

Great Joy Teaching said to the Buddha: “World Honored One, we would like to see all the buddhas who are your emanations, so we can pay homage to them and make offerings to them.”

At that moment the Buddha sent forth a ray of white light, which made the buddhas of countless millions of lands in the east all appear.

All their lands had a ground made of crystal, and jewel trees, and jewel adornments, and were filled with countless millions of bodhisattvas, with jewel banners flying everywhere, and networks of jewels spread over them.

The buddhas in these lands were expounding all the teachings with great wondrous voices. With them appeared countless millions of bodhisattvas, filling up all the lands, explaining the teachings for groups of listeners.

It was the same scene in the west and the south and the north, and above and below – wherever the ray of white light shone, it was like this.

Then, throughout the ten directions, each of the buddhas said to the multitudes of bodhisattvas around him: “Good people, now I must go to the world Endurance, where Shakyamuni Buddha is, and join him in making offerings to the jeweled tower of the one who has arrived at reality, Many Jewels.”

At that moment the world Endurance became pure and clean, with the ground made of lapis lazuli, adorned with jewel trees, and eight paths marked out with golden cords. All the hamlets and villages and towns and cities and oceans and rivers and mountains

and forests vanished. The land was filled with the scent of burning incense and the fragrance of flowers and was covered with a network of jewels and streamers, from which hung jeweled bells.

Only the assembly that was gathered together [listening to Shakyamuni Buddha] remained there – all the celestial beings and humans [who normally inhabit the world Endurance] were transported elsewhere.

Then all these buddhas came to the world Endurance, each bringing along a single great bodhisattva as an attendant, and arrived beneath a jeweled tree. Each of these jewel trees was five hundred miles high and adorned with branches, leaves, blossoms, and fruit. Beneath each of these jewel trees was a lion seat decorated with great jewels.

At that point, all these buddhas sat down cross-legged in these seats, filling up all the worlds of the galaxy in this fashion – and still this was not all the emanations of Shakyamuni Buddha from a single direction.

Wanting to make room for all the buddhas that emanated from him, Shakyamuni Buddha then transformed billions of other worlds throughout the universe, making them pure and clean, clearing them of hell-beings, hungry ghosts, and jealous spirits, and moving the celestial beings and humans [who normally inhabited these worlds] elsewhere.

The worlds that he transformed also now had ground made of lapis lazuli, were adorned with jewel trees five hundred miles high, with branches, leaves, blossoms, and fruit. Beneath each of these jewel trees was a lion seat fifty miles high, decorated with great

jewels. All the oceans and rivers and mountain ranges also vanished from these worlds, and all of them together became a single buddha-land, with a level ground made of jewels, and covered by a network of jewels, hung with banners and canopies, redolent of precious incense, with celestial jewel flowers spread all over the ground.

Then all the emanation bodies sent out in the east by Shakyamuni Buddha, the buddhas in countless numbers of worlds, all expounding the teaching, came and gathered together on this site.

In the same way, all the buddhas from every direction in turn came and gathered together, and sat down on all sides. Every direction was filled with the enlightened ones, the ones who had arrived at reality, from countless numbers of lands, each one sitting under a jeweled tree on a lion seat.

They all sent their attendants to offer greetings to Shakyamuni Buddha and gave them bouquets of jewel flowers to present to him. They told their attendants:

“Good people, go to Vulture Peak, to the abode of Shakyamuni Buddha, and tell him what I say: ‘Is your health good? Are you free from troubles? Is your vital energy peaceful and joyful? Are your congregations of disciples and bodhisattvas at peace?’ Then take these jewel flowers and scatter them before the Buddha as an offering, and say this: ‘The buddha [who sent me] would like to join you in opening this jewel tower.’ ”

All these buddhas sent their attendants to do this.

Then Shakyamuni Buddha saw that all the emanated buddhas had gathered together and were all seated on the lion seats, and he heard that all these buddhas wanted to join him in opening the jeweled tower. So he rose from his seat and stood hovering in midair.

The entire audience stood up and joined their palms together in salute, looking at the Buddha with a single mind.

Then Shakyamuni Buddha opened the seven-jeweled door to the tower with his right hand. It made a great sound, like the unlocking of the gate of a great city.

Immediately, everyone in the assembly saw the enlightened one Many Jewels seated in the tower on a lion seat, with his body intact, as if he were in a state of meditative concentration. They also heard his words:

“Excellent, well done! Shakyamuni Buddha, you have just set forth this sutra, *Lotus of the Truth* – I heard this sutra, and so I came here.”

Then and there the entire audience witnessed this buddha from infinite ages past speaking these words, and they exclaimed at the unprecedented marvel. They scattered masses of celestial flowers over the Buddha Many Jewels and the Buddha Shakyamuni.

Then the Buddha Many Jewels offered to share his seat inside the jeweled tower with Shakyamuni Buddha, and said these words: “Shakyamuni Buddha, you may join me on this seat.”

Then Shakyamuni Buddha went into the tower and sat down cross-legged on his half of the seat.

Seeing these two enlightened beings who had arrived at reality sitting together cross-legged on a lion seat in the jeweled tower, everyone in the great assembly formed this thought:

“The seat of these enlightened ones is lofty and far away. We wish that these beings who have arrived at reality will use their spiritual powers to enable us to join them up in the empty air.”

Shakyamuni Buddha immediately used his spiritual powers and brought the whole assembly up in the air and told them all in a grand voice:

“Now is the time for whoever is able to expound this sutra *Lotus of the Truth* here in this world Endurance to do so. Before long I will die and enter nirvana, and I want to entrust this sutra *Lotus of the Truth* to you who are here now.”

Then, to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One [Shakyamuni Buddha] spoke a verse:

Though he reached final nirvana long, long ago,
This Sagely Lord, this World Honored One [Many Jewels],
Is here in this jewel tower,
And still comes to us for the sake of the Teaching of Truth –
How can any one of you not work hard for the Teaching of
Truth?
This buddha Many Jewels became extinct many eons ago,
But he is listening to the Teaching of Truth wherever it
occurs,
Because it is hard to encounter it.

This buddha's original vow was:

“After my demise, wherever I go,
I will always be able to hear the Teaching of Truth,
And my emanation bodies, infinite numbers of buddhas,
Countless as the sands of the Ganges,
Will also come along, wishing to hear the Teaching of
Truth.”

And so when he became extinct,
The [countless emanation bodies of] the Buddha Many
Jewels

Left behind their wondrous lands,
Their throngs of disciples – celestial beings, humans, ocean
spirits, earth spirits –

And all the offerings they made,
And came to this place in order to enable the Teaching of
Truth to endure.

To make room for all of them,
I have used my spiritual powers to move countless beings
And to make this world pure.

Each of these emanated buddhas
Has arrived under a jeweled tree.

[The scene here] is like a pool of clear water adorned with
lotus flowers.

Under the jeweled trees, the lion seats have a buddha
sitting on each one,

Resplendent with light,
Like a giant fire blazing on a dark night.
Their bodies send forth a wondrous fragrance
That pervades the lands of the ten directions.
The living beings who catch the scent
Are moved by an invincible joy,
Like tiny tree branches blown by a great wind.
By this expedient means,
We enable the Teaching of Truth to endure forever.
I say to all of you in this great assembly –
After my demise who will be able to protect and uphold this
 sutra?
Who will be able to expound this sutra?
Here and now, in the presence of the Buddha,
Let them come and make their own vows.
Although he passed away long ago,
By means of his great vow,
The Buddha Many Jewels
Still roars the lion's roar [of the Teaching of Truth].
Many Jewels, as one who has arrived at reality,
Along with me, and all these emanation buddhas gathered
 here,
All know that this is our purpose.
I say to all you children of the buddhas –

Whoever among you is able to protect the Teaching of Truth
Should make a great vow to make it endure forever.

Those of you who can protect the teaching of this sutra
Are thereby serving both me and Many Jewels.

This Buddha Many Jewels, in his jeweled tower,
Constantly travels among the worlds of the ten directions
For the sake of this sutra.

And he also makes offerings
To all the emanation buddhas who have come here
To adorn all the worlds with light.

If you set forth this sutra,
You will thereby see me, and see the Buddha Many Jewels,
And see all these emanation buddhas.

Good people, each and every one of you should think this
over carefully.

This is difficult work –

You must make a great vow!

Setting forth the countless other sutras –

This would not be so difficult.

Moving the great polar mountain to countless other lands –

This would not be so difficult.

Nudging a galaxy into another far-off universe –

This would not be so difficult.

Standing at the peak of the highest heaven,

Expounding countless sutras –

This would not be so difficult.

But being able to expound this sutra after my death, in a
world of evil –

This is indeed difficult!

If you were to carry a load of dry straw on your back

Through the conflagration at the end of the eon,

So that none of it got burnt –

This would not be so difficult.

But to be able to uphold this sutra after my death

And explain it to even a single person –

This is indeed difficult!

If you were to memorize the entire canon of scriptures,

All twelve divisions, all eighty-four thousand volumes,

And expound it to people,

And make them all listen to it,

So that they all attained the six spiritual powers –

Even if you were able to do all this –

This would not be so difficult.

But being able to listen to this sutra after my death,

And to ask about its meaning and intent –

This is indeed difficult!

If a person were to expound the teaching

And enable countless thousands and millions of people

To become worthy ones,
Complete with the six spiritual powers,
And bring them this benefit –
This would not be so difficult.
But being able to uphold a sutra like this after my death –
This is indeed difficult!
Serving the path of the enlightened ones,
From the beginning until now, in countless worlds,
I have set forth all the sutras.
And among them all,
This one is supreme.
Those who can uphold it
Are upholding the body of the buddhas.
Good people, after my death,
Whoever among you is able
To accept and uphold and read and recite this sutra,
Here in the presence of the buddhas,
Make your own vows!
This sutra is hard to uphold –
If anyone can do so for any length of time,
Then I will rejoice, and so will all the buddhas.
People who can accomplish this
Will be acclaimed by all the buddhas.
By doing this they will become courageous.

By doing this they will make spiritual progress.

By doing this they will uphold discipline and act like true
ascetics.

And by doing this they will quickly find

The Supreme Path of the Enlightened Ones.

Those in future generations who are able to uphold this
sutra

Are the real children of the buddhas –

They will abide in good states.

After my death, those who can understand the truth of this
sutra

Will be the eyes of the world of celestial beings and
humans.

In a world of fear and danger,

Those who can set forth this sutra even for an instant

Should be supported by all celestial beings and humans!

Chapter 12: Devadatta

At that time, the Buddha addressed the assembly of bodhisattvas, celestial beings, and humans:

“For countless ages past, I was tirelessly seeking the sutra *Lotus of the Truth* . For many eons I was always a king, vowing to find supreme enlightenment, and my mind never retreated from this aspiration.

“Wishing to fulfill the six ways of transcendence, I diligently practiced giving without holding back: [over many lifetimes I gave away] elephants, horses, jewels; I relinquished sovereignty over nations and cities; I gave away spouses, children, servants; I sacrificed my head, eyes, marrow, brain, flesh, hands, feet; I did not spare my own body and life.

“In the past [during the time when I was a king], and the human lifespan was immeasurably long, I abandoned my throne for the sake of the teaching, and turned over political power to the crown prince. I ordered drums to be sounded and announcements to be made to the people throughout the realm that I was seeking the teaching. [The word went forth:] ‘Whoever can teach me about the Great Journey, I will provide for them and serve them to the end of my days.’

“At the time there was an adept who came and told me: ‘I have the Great Journey teaching, and it is called the *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth Sutra* . If you do not disobey me, I will communicate it to you.’

“When I heard the adept’s words, I was overjoyed, and I immediately followed him, providing him with all that he needed. I picked fruit for him, drew water, gathered firewood, and even offered my body to him to use as a seat. I served him at all times tirelessly with my body and mind. For a thousand years, for the sake of the teaching, I made every effort to provide for him and serve him, so that he should want for nothing.”

Then, to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

I remember [what I did in] ages past
In order to seek the True Teaching.
Though I was a king lifetime after lifetime,
I did not crave the pleasures of the five desires.
Instead, I had it announced far and wide
That if there was anyone who could explain the True
Teaching for me,
I would become his servant.
At the time there was an adept called Ashita
Who came and told me, the great king:
“I have a subtle wondrous teaching,
Rarely encountered in the world.
If you can cultivate the practice of it,
I will teach it to you.”
As I listened to the words of the adept,
My mind was full of joy,

So I immediately became his follower.
Providing for his needs,
I gathered firewood for him, and picked fruit for him,
And respectfully gave these to him when he needed them.
Because I was intent on the wondrous teaching,
My body and mind never grew tired.
In order to serve living beings everywhere,
I diligently sought the great teaching.
I did not act for myself, or to enjoy sensory pleasures.
Thus I became a great king,
Diligently seeking and protecting this teaching,
And thus I got to become a buddha,
And I am here teaching you.

The Buddha told the audience: “I am the incarnation of the king from that time, and the one who today is [my cousin] Devadatta was the adept.

“Because Devadatta was a wise teacher, he enabled me to complete the six ways of transcendence, to become equipped with compassionate joyful generosity, to have the thirty-two marks of the enlightened ones, the eighty virtues, the golden hue with purple luster, the ten powers, the four forms of fearlessness, the four ways of attracting people, the strength of the path of the eighteen uncommon spiritual powers. [\[14\]](#)

“He enabled me to achieve correct enlightenment equal to the buddhas, and to bring salvation to living beings on a wide scale. All

this happened because Devadatta was a wise teacher.”

The Buddha said to the monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen:

“Countless eons after this, Devadatta will become a buddha. His name will be Heavenly King, one who has arrived at reality. He will be one worthy of support, of true all-encompassing knowledge, of enlightened conduct, righteous, liberated from the world, a peerless being, a master guide, a teacher of celestial beings and humans, a buddha, a world honored one. His world will be called Heavenly Path.

“In that future time, the Buddha Heavenly King will stay in the world for twenty intermediate eons, teaching living beings the wondrous teaching on a wide scale. [Through his teachings] countless living beings will attain the fruit of the worthy ones, and countless living beings will develop the mind of those enlightened through contemplating interdependent causation. [Through his teachings] countless living beings will develop the aspiration for the Supreme Path and attain the forbearance that comes with knowing that no relative phenomena exist absolutely and reach the stage from which there is no falling back.

“After the death of the Buddha Heavenly King, his genuine teaching will survive for thirty intermediate eons. A memorial tower made of the seven precious substances will be built over his remains, six hundred miles high, four hundred miles around, and the celestial beings and humans [of that world] will pay homage and make offerings of various flowers and incense and garments and necklaces and pennants and banners and jewel canopies and music and song.

“Infinite numbers of living beings will attain the fruit of the worthy ones, infinite numbers of living beings will awaken as solitary illuminates, and inconceivable numbers of living beings will develop the aspiration for enlightenment and reach the stage from which there is no falling back.”

The Buddha told the audience:

“In future ages, if there are good men and good women who hear the chapter on Devadatta in the sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* , and with pure minds believe it and do not doubt it, they will never fall into hell, or be born as hungry ghosts or animals. They will be reborn in the presence of the buddhas of the ten directions, and where they are born, they will always be hearing this sutra. If they are born in the planes of humans or celestial beings, they will experience wondrous joy, as if they were born by transformation in a lotus flower in the presence of the buddhas.”

At that moment, one of the bodhisattvas from the direction of the nadir who had followed the Buddha Many Jewels, whose own name was Accumulated Wisdom, said to the Buddha Many Jewels: “We must return to our own land.”

Shakyamuni Buddha said to the bodhisattva Accumulated Wisdom: “Wait awhile, good man. There is a bodhisattva here called Manjushri with whom you should meet and discuss the wondrous teaching. Then you can return to your own land.”

Then Manjushri, seated on a thousand lotus blossoms as big as wagon wheels, accompanied by other bodhisattvas also seated on jewel lotus flowers, spontaneously emerged from the palace of

the Ocean Spirit King Sagara in the great ocean and stood there hovering in midair.

Then Manjushri went to the Vulture Peak, came down from the lotuses, and went to where the Buddha was. He bowed down and paid homage to the two enlightened ones [Shakyamuni Buddha and the Buddha Many Jewels].

Having paid obeisance to the two buddhas, Manjushri went to where the bodhisattva Accumulated Wisdom was. They greeted each other and sat down.

The bodhisattva Accumulated Wisdom asked Manjushri: “When you went to the palace of the ocean spirits, how many living beings did you teach?”

Manjushri said: “Their number was measureless, uncountable, beyond what the mouth can say or the mind can calculate. Just wait for a moment, and you will have the proof.”

Before Manjushri had finished speaking, countless bodhisattvas seated on jewel lotuses surged forth from the ocean, came to Vulture Peak, and stood there hovering in midair.

All these bodhisattvas had been taught by Manjushri, and they all had mastered the bodhisattva practices, and they all were discoursing together on the six means of transcendence [generosity, discipline, patience, dedication, meditation, and wisdom]. Those who were originally just seekers of personal salvation, and who had stood there in midair discoursing on the practices of seekers, now were all cultivating the practice of the truth of emptiness in the Great Journey.

[\[15\]](#)

Manjushri said to the bodhisattva Accumulated Wisdom: “The work of teaching in the palace of the ocean spirits in the ocean was like this.”

Then the bodhisattva Accumulated Wisdom offered a verse of praise:

You are a being of great wisdom and virtue and courage
and strength –

You have taught and brought salvation to countless living
beings.

Now this great multitude has become visible to me,
Communicating the truth of reality as it is,
Opening the way to the teaching of the One Journey,
Giving guidance to living beings on a broad scale,
Enabling them to achieve enlightenment rapidly.

Manjushri said: “Working in the ocean with the ocean spirits, I always taught the sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* .”

The bodhisattva Accumulated Wisdom asked Manjushri: “This sutra is very profound, subtle, and wondrous, a treasure among all the sutras, something rare in the world. Is it not true that if living beings work hard to make spiritual progress cultivating the practices of this sutra, they will rapidly achieve enlightenment?”

Manjushri said: “The Ocean Spirit King Sagara has a daughter who is just eight years old. She is wise and intelligent, and she has a good knowledge of all the basic behaviors of living beings.

“She has attained the power of holding her mind on true reality, and she has been able to accept and uphold the most profound secret treasury taught by the buddhas.

“She has entered deeply into meditative concentration, and she comprehends all the teachings. In an instant she developed the aspiration for enlightenment, and she has reached the level where there is no turning back.

“Her eloquence flows unimpeded. She regards living beings with compassion, as if they were her children. She is fully equipped with all meritorious qualities. What her mind thinks about, and what her mouth expresses, is subtle, wondrous, far reaching, great. She is compassionate and sympathetic, and her intent is harmonious and refined. She is indeed capable of arriving at enlightenment.”

Before Manjushri had finished speaking, the Ocean Spirit King’s daughter suddenly appeared before him, saluted him, stood to one side, and offered a verse of praise:

With a deep comprehension of the characteristics of good
and evil deeds,

He shines everywhere in all the worlds of the ten directions.

His subtle wondrous pure truth body

Possesses the thirty-two marks [of an enlightened being].

He adorns the truth body with the eighty virtues.

He is admired by celestial beings and humans,

Respected by ocean spirits and other spirits –

All kinds of living beings venerate him.

I too heard his teachings and achieved enlightenment,
As only the buddhas can attest to.

I present the teaching of the Great Journey
To liberate living beings from suffering.

Then Shariputra asked the ocean spirit girl: “You say you have attained the Supreme Path so quickly – but this is hard to believe. Why so? Because a female body is defiled and cannot be a vessel of the true teaching. So how can you manage to achieve supreme enlightenment? The Path to Enlightenment is a long-term undertaking and can only be consummated after countless eons of diligent effort and practice, cultivating the various means of transcendence.

“Furthermore, [in the conventional view] there are five barriers for one with a female body: a female cannot become a brahma king or a celestial king or a demon king or a wheel-turning human king or a buddha. How could you, with your female body, have so quickly become an enlightened being?”

At that point the ocean spirit girl took a precious pearl, equal in value to all the worlds of the galaxy, and handed it to the Buddha. The Buddha immediately accepted it from her.

The ocean spirit girl then said to the bodhisattva Accumulated Wisdom and the venerable monk Shariputra: “I offered the precious pearl, and the Buddha accepted it – did this not happen quickly?”

They answered: “Very quickly.”

The ocean spirit girl said to them: “Use your spiritual powers, and watch how I attained enlightenment, and you will see that it was

quicker than this.”

Then the whole assembly saw the ocean spirit girl in an instant complete the practices of the bodhisattvas and journey to an undefiled world in the south. There, she sat on a jewel lotus and achieved true enlightenment. She acquired the thirty-two marks of the enlightened ones and the eighty virtues and began setting forth the wondrous teaching for all the living beings of all the worlds in the ten directions.

Then and there, everyone in the world Endurance, both human and nonhuman, saw from afar how this ocean spirit girl became enlightened and was teaching the celestial beings and humans assembled there at the time. Their minds were filled with great joy, and they all offered their respects from afar.

Countless living beings heard the ocean spirit girl’s teaching and were awakened and reached the level from which there is no falling back.

Countless living beings received a prediction that they would find the Path to Enlightenment.

The undefiled world [where the ocean spirit girl was teaching] quaked, and in the world Endurance three thousand living beings reached the stage where there is no falling back, and three thousand living beings developed the aspiration for enlightenment and received predictions of enlightenment.

The bodhisattva Accumulated Wisdom and the venerable monk Shariputra, along with everyone in the assembly, silently accepted [the truth of what the ocean spirit girl had said.]

Chapter 13: Encouragement to Uphold the Sutra

Then the great bodhisattva Medicine King and the great bodhisattva Great Joy Teaching, along with a retinue of twenty thousand bodhisattvas, made this vow in the presence of the Buddha:

“We do not want you to worry, World Honored One. After your death we will faithfully uphold, read, recite, and teach this sutra. In the evil times of the future, the roots of goodness of living beings will become ever fewer, and their arrogance will increase, and their love of gain will increase, and their roots of evil will increase, and they will be ever farther from liberation.

“Though they will be hard to teach, we will use the power of great patience to read and recite this sutra, to uphold it and teach it, to write out copies of it, and to serve it in all sorts of ways, not sparing our bodies or our lives.”

Then five hundred worthy ones in the assembly received predictions of enlightenment, and said to the Buddha:

“World Honored One, we too vow to teach this sutra on a broad scale in other lands.”

There were also eight thousand people in the stage of study and beyond the stage of study who rose from their seats and joined their palms to salute the Buddha and made this vow:

“World Honored One, we too will teach this sutra on a broad scale in other lands. Why? Because in this world Endurance, people have many faults and harbor increasing arrogance, and their merits

are meager, and they are polluted by anger, and they are insincere and devious, and their minds are not genuine.”

Then the Buddha’s aunt, the nun Gautami Mahaprajapati, and the six thousand nuns with her, some in the stage of study and some beyond the stage of study, all rose from their seats, and with one accord saluted the Buddha and looked up at him without taking their eyes off him for a moment.

Then the Buddha said to Gautami:

“Why do you look at me with such a sad expression? Are you thinking that I did not mention your name among those for whom I gave predictions of enlightenment?”

“Gautami, earlier I said that I am giving predictions of enlightenment to all the disciples seeking salvation. Now you want to know my prediction for you.

“In future lifetimes, you will be a great teacher of the teachings of sixty-eight thousand billion buddhas, and these six thousand nuns with you, some in the stage of study and some beyond the stage of study, will all be teachers.

“In this way you will gradually complete the bodhisattva path, and you will become a buddha called Joyously Seen by All Living Beings, one who has arrived at reality, one worthy of support, of true all-encompassing knowledge, of enlightened conduct, righteous, liberated from the world, a peerless being, a master guide, a teacher of celestial beings and humans, a buddha, a world honored one.

“Gautami, this Buddha Joyously Seen by All Living Beings and her six thousand bodhisattvas one by one will be given predictions of

achieving ultimate, complete enlightenment.”

Then the nun Yasodhara [who had been the Buddha’s wife when he was a young prince and was] the mother of their son Rahula, thought to herself: “In giving predictions of enlightenment, the World Honored One has not mentioned my name.”

The Buddha said to Yasodhara:

“In future lifetimes, you will cultivate the practices of the bodhisattvas in the teachings of thousands of billions of buddhas, and you will become a great teacher, and gradually complete the path of the enlightened ones.

“In a land of goodness you will become a buddha, and you will be called Endowed with a Million Lights, one who has arrived at reality, one worthy of support, of true all-encompassing knowledge, of enlightened conduct, righteous, liberated from the world, a peerless being, a master guide, a teacher of celestial beings and humans, a buddha, a world honored one. Your lifetime as a buddha will be countless trackless eons.”

At that point the nun Mahaprajapati and the nun Yasodhara and their followers felt great joy and experienced what they had never experienced before. In the presence of the Buddha, they spoke a verse:

World Honored One, Guide, Teacher –

You bring peace to celestial beings and humans!

Hearing you predicting our enlightenment,

Our minds are fully at peace.

After the nuns had finished the verse, they said to the Buddha: “World Honored One, we too will be able to communicate this sutra on a wide scale in other worlds.”

Then the World Honored One looked upon the countless numbers of bodhisattvas. These bodhisattvas had all reached the level from which there is no falling back and were turning the Wheel of the Teaching which never retreats. They had attained all the mnemonic powers, all the forms of concentration. They immediately arose from their seats, and came in front of the Buddha, and with a single mind joined their hands in salute and formulated this thought:

“If the World Honored One will command us to uphold this sutra, we will obey his instructions, and disseminate this teaching far and wide.”

They also thought this: “The Buddha is keeping silent now, and we have not been given his instructions, so what should we do?”

Then these bodhisattvas, respectfully following the intent of the Buddha, and also wishing to fulfill their fundamental vows, roared the lion’s roar [of liberation] in the presence of the Buddha, and made this vow:

“World Honored One, after you are dead, we will travel back and forth among all the worlds of the ten directions, to enable living beings to write out this sutra, accept and uphold it, read and recite it, and know how to expound its meaning.

“We will practice according to the True Teaching and maintain correct mindfulness, all thanks to the Buddha’s awe-inspiring

powers. We only hope that you will look on us from afar as we work in other lands, and keep and protect us.”

Then all the bodhisattvas joined together and spoke a verse:

Please do not worry!

After the death of the Buddha, in worlds of fearful evil,

We will teach this sutra far and wide.

There may be ignorant people who slander us,

They may attack us with knives and clubs,

But we will endure it all.

The monastics in evil worlds

Will have misguided ideas and devious minds –

They will think they have attained, though they haven’t.

They will be full of selfish pride –

Though they dwell in the wilderness wearing patched robes

–

And think they are practicing the genuine path.

They will look down upon ordinary people,

And they will be greedy for gain and for support.

They will teach the ordinary people

And be respected by the worldly

As worthy adepts with spiritual powers.

These monastics will harbor evil intentions

And be constantly preoccupied with vulgar worldly affairs.

They will falsely be called ascetics,

And enjoy denouncing us.
They will say of us:
“These supposed monastics
Are teaching the theories of alien paths
Out of greed for profit and support.
They have made up this sutra
To delude and deceive the people of the world.
They are seeking fame and repute –
That’s why they spin out theories about this sutra.”
They will go out among the multitudes,
Constantly slandering us.
They will defame us and accuse us of evil deeds
To kings and courtiers and priests and householders
And to all the other monastics.
They will say that we have misguided ideas,
They will say we are expounding heresies.
But because we respect the Buddha,
We will bear with all these evil deeds.
They will mock us, saying, “You must be a buddha,”
But we will endure all this contumely.
In eras of defilement, in worlds of evil,
There will be many fearful things –
Evil spirits will enter into people’s bodies,
Denouncing and reviling us.

We respectfully believe in the Buddha,
So we will put on the armor of patient forbearance
In order to teach this sutra.
We will endure all these difficulties,
We will not spare our bodies and lives,
Caring only about the Supreme Path.
In future worlds we will protect and uphold the Buddha's
teachings.
You should know this, O World Honored One –
In defiled worlds the evil monastics
Will not know about the expedient means of the enlightened
ones.
They will not know that the enlightened ones taught
According to what was right for the time and place.
They will often drive us out of the temples
With bitter words and angry frowns.
We will endure all these evils patiently,
Remembering what the Buddha taught us.
Wherever there are people seeking the True Teaching,
In the villages and towns,
We will go there and teach the truth which the Buddha
entrusted to us.
Thus we will act as the Buddha's deputies
And go among the multitudes without being afraid of
anything.

We will expound the teaching well,
Vowing that the Buddha will endure in peace.
We make this vow
In the presence of the Buddha,
And to the enlightened ones of all the worlds of the future –
The Buddha knows what is in our hearts!

Chapter 14: Peaceful Joyful Action

Then the bodhisattva Manjushri, the prince of the teaching, said to the Buddha:

“O World Honored One, great bodhisattvas such as these are rare. Because they respectfully follow the Buddha, they have taken a great vow to protect and uphold and teach this sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* in the evil worlds of the future.

“O World Honored One, how will the great bodhisattvas be able to teach this sutra in future evil worlds?”

The Buddha told Manjushri: “They must use four techniques of staying at peace, if they want to teach this sutra in the evil worlds of the future. The first is to stay at peace where bodhisattvas act and with what the bodhisattvas approach, in order to be able to expound this sutra.

“What is the place where great bodhisattvas act?”

“Great bodhisattvas stay on the ground of forbearance and patience in the face of mistreatment. They are mild and harmonious and good at adapting, they are never abrupt or aggressive, and they never feel alarmed. They do not engage in contrived activity toward anything, and they observe the true reality of all phenomena [as without independent identity and only relatively real], but they do not fail to distinguish among things.

“This is called the place where great bodhisattvas act.

“What do great bodhisattvas approach?”

“Great bodhisattvas do not try to get on intimate terms with kings and princes and great courtiers and highly placed officials.

“They do not approach those who are committed to other philosophies or religions, or those who concoct worldly essays or sing the praises of worldly writings, or those who engage in sophistry and debate.

“They do not approach those who relish violent clashes and duels, or those who trade in magic tricks for entertainment.

“They do not approach defiled people, or those who raise livestock, or hunters, or those who follow illicit customs. If such people come to them, then the bodhisattvas teach them, but they have no expectations of them.

“They do not approach literalist believers who are seeking personal salvation, or ask after them, or get together with them in buildings or along paths or in lecture halls. When such people come to them, then the bodhisattvas teach them according to what is appropriate for them, but they have no expectations of them and seek nothing from them.

“The great bodhisattvas also must not talk to people about the teaching because they feel sexual desire for them and enjoy meeting with them. When they enter people’s houses, they must not try to get on overly familiar terms with them. They should not enter other people’s houses alone, but if they have to do so, they should be focused single-mindedly on the Buddha. When they teach, they should not show off or flirt. They should not try to get on overly familiar terms with people even for the sake of the teaching, let alone for any other purpose.

“They should not take special pleasure in nurturing young disciples or novices or children, or in serving as their teacher.

“They should always like to sit in meditation in solitude, learning how to control their minds.

“This describes the first level of what bodhisattvas approach.

“Moreover, great bodhisattvas look upon all things as empty and see their ultimate reality. They are not turned upside down by things, they are not moved by things, they do not retreat from things, they are not turned around by things. They see all things as empty, as having no intrinsic identity. The road of using language as a substitute for reality is cut off.

“They see that all phenomena are not born, do not depart, do not begin, have no name, have no fixed characteristics, have nothing that exists, no measures, no boundaries, no obstacles, no barriers. They see that all phenomena just exist relatively as a process of interdependent causation, and it is only due to a cognitive error that they are spoken of as existing.

“Always observing these characteristics of phenomena is called the second level of what bodhisattvas approach.”

Then, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

If there are bodhisattvas in future evil worlds,
Who have no fear and want to teach this sutra,
They must enter into a certain kind of action and a certain
approach.

They usually stay away from kings and princes and
courtiers and officials.

They avoid those who are violent and dangerous.

They avoid degraded people and those committed to alien
beliefs.

They do not approach those of overweening arrogance,
Or those attached to the lesser vehicles.

Monastics who learn the scriptures but break the precepts,
Who are called worthy ones and monks and nuns,
But like frivolity and are attached to sensory desires –
Those who seek nirvana for themselves –

They do not approach such people as these.

But if such people come with good intentions

To where the bodhisattvas are, in order to hear of the
Buddha Path,

The bodhisattvas explain the teaching for them

With a fearless mind,

Not expecting anything from them.

The bodhisattvas do not approach women or men with
sexual motives.

They do not approach butchers or hunters,

Or those who profit by slaughter, or live by selling flesh,

Or prostitutes and pimps –

They do not approach such people.

Assassins and sexual entertainers they do not approach.

They do not meet with people alone behind closed doors to teach.

When they are teaching they do not engage in frivolous banter.

When they go into villages to ask for alms,

They bring a companion,

Or if they have no companion,

They concentrate single-mindedly on the Buddha.

This describes where a bodhisattva acts,

And what a bodhisattva approaches.

By abiding peacefully in these,

Bodhisattvas can be at peace and enjoy teaching.

Moreover, bodhisattvas do not construct

[Categories of] high, medium, and low phenomena,

Contrived and uncontrived phenomena,

Real or unreal phenomena.

Bodhisattvas do not make distinctions of male and female.

They do not grasp at anything,

They do not perceive anything as really existing –

This is called where the bodhisattvas act.

All phenomena are empty and without absolute existence –

There is nothing that abides permanently,

Nor is there any beginning or ending –

This is what those who are wise approach.

Erroneous distinctions make it out that
These phenomena exist, those do not exist,
These are real, those are unreal,
These are born, those are unborn.
But bodhisattvas work in solitude
To control their minds,
So that they abide in peace, without moving,
Like the great polar mountain.
They view all phenomena
As not existing in an absolute sense.
They view all phenomena as empty,
Without solid identities,
Neither coming into existence,
Nor passing out of existence,
Neither moving forward nor moving back,
Always abiding in the oneness of reality –
This describes where bodhisattvas act.
As for what they approach
When they teach this sutra –
They are free from any weakness.
Sometimes bodhisattvas enter into a quiet room
And use correct mindfulness
To view all phenomena according to the truth.
They arise from their meditative concentration

To teach and communicate with
Kings and princes and nobles and commoners and priests.
Teaching this sutra,
Their minds are at peace, and free from any weakness –
Manjushri, this is the first method of staying at peace
To be able to teach the sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* in
future worlds.

“Moreover, Manjushri, after my death, in order to teach this
sutra in the age of the end of the teaching, it will be necessary to
abide in peaceful joyful action.

“If you teach the sutra verbally, or you read the sutra, you
should not want to speak of people’s faults, or of faults in the sutra.
You should not look down on other teachers, and you should not
speak of the virtues and faults or the strengths and weaknesses of
other people. With literalist believers seeking personal salvation, you
should not speak of them by name when describing their faults or
when praising their virtues, nor should you feel any animosity toward
them.

“If you are good at cultivating this kind of peaceful joyful mind,
you will not offend against the ideas of your audience. If they ask
questions, give them explanations in terms of the Great Journey, not
the lesser journeys, and enable them to find all-knowledge.”

Then, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored
One spoke a verse:

Bodhisattvas are always teaching joyfully and peacefully –
They spread out their mats on the pure ground,

They anoint their bodies with oil,
And wash away the dust and grime.
They wear clean new clothes,
They are clean inside and out,
As they peacefully occupy the teacher's seat.
They give explanations according to the questions they are
asked –
They teach monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen,
Kings and princes, courtiers and commoners,
Using the subtle wondrous truth and a peaceful demeanor.
If people pose questions,
They answer according to the truth.
They set forth the teaching clearly,
Using concrete examples, metaphors, explanations –
With these expedient means,
They enable their listeners to develop their aspiration for
enlightenment,
So that it gradually grows and increases,
And they enter into the Path to Enlightenment.
Eliminating sloppy ideas and lazy thinking,
Detaching from sorrows and afflictions,
They explain the True Teaching with a compassionate mind.
Day and night they communicate the teaching of the
Supreme Path –

They use all sorts of situations and countless metaphoric
explanations

To open the way for living beings and make them all rejoice.

Teaching with no expectation of acquiring material goods,

They have a single-minded focus –

Setting forth the causal conditions of the teaching,

Vowing to achieve the Path to Enlightenment,

And enabling all people to do the same thing.

This then is the great advantage –

This is serving peacefully and joyfully.

If there are people after my death

Who can teach this sutra *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth*

With their minds unimpeded by jealousy or resentment

Or any of the barriers of affliction,

Without sorrow or sadness,

Unafraid of slander or attacks,

Without being rejected or driven out,

Because they abide in patience –

Wise people like this, who are good at cultivating their
minds,

Will be able to abide in peace and joy,

As I have just taught.

Even in a million eons, even with countless metaphors,

It would be impossible to fully describe the merits of such
people.

“Moreover, Manjushri, in the future when the teaching is about to disappear, bodhisattvas who accept and uphold and read and recite this sutra should not harbor any feelings of jealousy or any intentions of flattering or deceiving people.

“They should not reject those who are studying Buddhism or seek out their shortcomings. If there are monastics or lay people who are seeking to become believers or solitary illuminates or seeking the bodhisattva path, you should not make trouble for them, or cause them to have doubts, by telling them that they are very far from the Path, and will never be able to attain all-knowledge because they are indulging themselves and neglecting the Path. You should not debate the teachings with such people, or enter into arguments with them. You should arouse the mind of great compassion towards all living beings.

“You should think of the ones who have arrived at reality as benevolent parents and think of the bodhisattvas as teachers. You must respect and honor all the great bodhisattvas of all worlds. You should teach all sentient beings equally, following the True Teaching, [giving them] neither too much nor too little. You must not say too much even to those who have a deep love of the teaching.

“Manjushri, in the future, when the teaching is about to disappear, if bodhisattvas can achieve this third level of peaceful joyful action, nothing will be able to confuse them when they are teaching. They will find good companions with whom to read and recite this sutra, and they will have great multitudes coming to hear this sutra.

“Those who have heard the sutra will be able to remember it, and having remembered it, they will be able to recite it, and having recited it, they will be able to speak it and write it down. They will get other people to write the sutra down, and support it, and respect it, and value it, and praise it.”

Then, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

If you want to teach this sutra,
You must abandon jealousy, resentment, and arrogance,
You must eliminate flattery and duplicity.
Always cultivate genuine straightforward conduct –
Do not look down on other people,
And do not engage in trivial debates about the teaching.
Do not cause other people to have doubts
By telling them they will not achieve enlightenment.
When the children of the buddhas explain the teaching,
They are also flexible and mild and patient,
They show compassion for everyone –
They are not lazy-minded.
The great bodhisattvas of all the worlds of the ten directions
Travel the Path out of compassion for sentient beings.
They have an attitude of respect toward sentient beings
And consider them their teachers.
They think of the enlightened beings as their supreme
parents.

They break through pride and arrogance

And teach without any obstruction.

The third method [of peaceful joyful action] is like this –

The wise must preserve and protect it.

Single-mindedly practicing peaceful joyful conduct,

They are honored by countless beings.

“Moreover, Manjushri, in the future when the teaching is about to disappear, bodhisattvas who uphold this sutra should engender the mind of great compassion toward both householders and monastics, and toward people who are not bodhisattvas, and think like this:

“ ‘These people are losing a great opportunity. The ones who have arrived at reality use expedient means to teach according to what is appropriate for the occasion, but these people do not find out about this teaching – they know nothing about it, they are unaware of it, they do not inquire into it, they do not trust it, they do not understand it.

“ ‘These people may not be asking about this sutra, they may not believe in it or understand it, but when we gain ultimate complete enlightenment, we must use our spiritual powers and the power of wisdom to influence them, wherever they are, and enable them to get the opportunity to dwell in this teaching.’

“Manjushri, after my demise, the bodhisattvas who can carry out this fourth method [of peaceful joyful action] will not go wrong when they are explaining this teaching. They will always be supported, respected, honored, and acclaimed by monks and nuns,

by laymen and laywomen, by kings and princes and courtiers, by the common people and by the priests. The celestial beings of the air who hear them teaching will also follow them and serve them. Whether they are in villages or cities or in the wilderness, people will come to ask them questions. Celestial beings will protect them day and night for the sake of the teaching.

“These bodhisattvas will be able to bring joy to all who listen to them. Why? Because this sutra is protected by the spiritual powers of all the enlightened ones of the past, present, and future.

“Manjushri, in countless lands, no one has even heard the name of this sutra *Flower of Truth* , much less gotten the chance to accept it and uphold it and read it and recite it.

“Manjushri, suppose a powerful emperor wanted to use his power to conquer other lands, but the lesser kings of those lands would not follow his commands. The emperor would raise all sorts of armed forces and go attack them.

“Seeing his troops victorious, the emperor would be very happy, and he would reward them according to their achievements. He might grant them lands and palaces, villages and towns. He might give them robes with which to adorn themselves. He might give them all sorts of valuables: gold, silver, lapis lazuli, mother-of-pearl, carnelian, coral, or agate. He might reward them with elephants, horses, carriages, slaves, serfs.

“The only thing the emperor would not give them would be the bright pearl from his topknot. Why not? Because only the emperor wears such a pearl. If he gave it away, all his retainers would be alarmed.

“Manjushri, the ones who arrive at reality are also like this. With the power of concentration and wisdom, they win the land of the Teaching of Truth, and they reign over the three realms [the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the formless realm]. But the demons of delusion, those minor kings, will not submit. So all the sages who act as the generals for the ones who arrive at reality go forth and do battle with them.

“When they are victorious, the ones who arrive at reality are happy, and teach all the various sutras for monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen, to make their minds rejoice. They reward them with meditative concentration, with liberation, with the power of undefiled faculties, with all the wealth of the teachings. They also bestow on them the citadel of nirvana, they tell them they will attain nirvana, to guide their minds and make them feel joy. But they do not teach them this sutra *Lotus of Truth* .

“Manjushri, it is as if the emperor, overjoyed on seeing his troops victorious, presented them with this incredible pearl which he had worn for so long on his topknot and would never give away to anyone.

“The ones who arrive at reality have acted like this too. As great kings of the teaching in the three realms, they have used the teaching to transform all living beings. They see that the army of sages has done battle with the demons of the five aggregates [that make up ordinary existence]_ [\[16\]](#)_and the demons of affliction and the deadly demons of delusion. They see that the army of sages has emerged victorious, destroying the three poisons of ignorance, anger, and craving, and emerged victorious from the three realms of

desire, form, and formlessness, smashing the net of delusion. When they see all this, the ones who arrive at reality are overjoyed.

“They now teach what they have never taught before – this sutra *Lotus of Truth* , which can enable living beings to arrive at all-knowledge, which in all worlds is often resented and met with skepticism.

“Manjushri, this sutra *Lotus of Truth* is supreme among the teachings of those who arrive at reality, and is the most profound of these teachings. They bestow the sutra at the very end, just like that powerful king at last giving the bright pearl which he had held on to for so long.

“Manjushri, this sutra *Lotus of Truth* is the secret treasure of those who arrive at reality, the most exalted of all the sutras. They have guarded it and protected it through the long night, and they have not communicated it falsely. Only now, today, do they present it to all of you.”

Then, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

If you always act with patience
And show compassion for everyone,
Only then can you set forth this sutra praised by the
Buddha.

In future worlds you must engender compassion,
For those beings have never heard of this sutra
And do not believe in it –

This is a great loss for them.
Having found the Path to Enlightenment,
I use various expedient means
In order to communicate this teaching
And enable people to abide within it.
This is like a powerful emperor,
Whose armies have been victorious,
Rewarding his warriors with all sorts of things –
Elephants and horse and carriages and chariots,
Adornments for their bodies,
Fields and houses, villages and towns,
Robes of honor and all sorts of precious things –
All these things he happily bestows on them.
If some of the warriors were brave and strong
And accomplished difficult feats,
The emperor would take the jewel from his crown
And give it to them as a reward.
The ones who arrive at reality are also this way –
They act as kings of the teachings.
With the great power of patient forbearance,
With the precious treasure of wisdom,
With great compassion,
They transform the world with the Teaching of Truth.
They see all people, subject to all kinds of afflictions,

Seeking liberation, doing battle with the demons of delusion.
For the sake of these people,
They explain all kinds of teachings.
Using great skill in expedient means,
They set forth the sutras.
Knowing that the people have derived strength from these,
Finally at the end, they teach this *Lotus of Truth* .
This is like the emperor untying his topknot
And giving the bright pearl to his victorious warriors.
This sutra is to be honored above all the many sutras –
I always keep it and protect it,
And I never teach it falsely.
Today it is time to teach it to you.
After I die, those who seek the Path to Enlightenment,
Those who want to attain peace and security
And set forth this sutra,
Should get familiar with these four methods [of
 bodhisattvas].
Let those who read this sutra
Be forever without worry or affliction, without sickness and
 pain.
Let their faces be fresh and bright,
Let them never be born impoverished and deprived.
People will be happy to see them,

People will respect them as admired sages,
Celestial beings will act as their emissaries.
Weapons will not reach them, poison will not harm them.
Those who would slander them will have their mouths
stopped up.
They will travel without fear, like lion kings.
The light of their wisdom will shine like the sun.
As if seeing marvels in a dream,
They will see all the ones who have arrived at reality,
Sitting on lion thrones,
Surrounded by congregations as they expound the
teachings.
They will see the ocean spirits and earth spirits and jealous
spirits,
Numerous as the sands,
Offering respects and saluting them.
They will see themselves explaining the teaching for them,
And they will see all the enlightened ones,
With lustrous golden bodies,
Sending forth countless lights illuminating everything,
With the sound of their holy voices,
Setting forth all the teachings.
As the buddhas explain the Supreme Teaching
For all classes of people,
They will see themselves among them,

Saluting and praising the buddhas,
Joyous at hearing the teaching,
Making offerings to the buddhas,
Attaining command over their minds,
Experiencing the wisdom from which there is no falling
back.

The buddhas will know that their minds
Have entered deeply into the Path of Enlightenment,
And will give them predictions of enlightenment,
Predicting that they will achieve correct awakening,
Saying “All you good people, in worlds to come,
Will find boundless wisdom and the great path of the
buddhas.

Your lands will be magnificent and pure,
Incomparably broad and vast.

There will be diverse congregations
Saluting you and listening to the teaching.”
They will see themselves in the mountain forests,
Cultivating the proper methods,
Witnessing true reality,
Entering deeply into meditative concentration,
Seeing the buddhas of the ten directions,
And the golden color of the bodies of the buddhas,
Adorned with a hundred blessed marks.

They will hear them teaching people.
They will always be having these good dreams –
They will dream they are kings of countries,
Who abandon their palaces and retinues
And the enjoyment of the most refined desires,
To journey to the site of enlightenment,
To sit on the lion seat under the bodhi tree,
Seeking enlightenment for seven days,
And finding the wisdom of all the buddhas who attain the
 Supreme Path,
And then arising to turn the Wheel of the Teaching,
Explaining the teaching for women and men, laypeople and
 monastics,
Over millions and billions of eons,
Communicating the immaculate wondrous teaching,
Bringing salvation to countless living beings,
And finally entering nirvana,
Like a lamp going out when the fuel is used up.
If these people teach the Supreme Truth,
In the future, in evil worlds,
They will gain a great advantage –
All the merits described above.

Chapter 15: Surging up from the Earth

Then countless numbers of great bodhisattvas from other worlds stood up in the great assembly, saluted, and offered their respects and said to the Buddha:

“World Honored One, if you will permit it, after your death, we will work hard here in this world Endurance, to protect and uphold this sutra, to communicate it and support it, and to teach it on a broad scale here in this world.”

Then the Buddha said to this multitude of great bodhisattvas: “Say no more, good people. It will not be necessary for you to protect and uphold this sutra. Why not? Here in our world Endurance we already have a much larger number of great bodhisattvas, each with a vast retinue, who after my death will be able to protect and uphold this sutra, to communicate it and teach it on a broad scale.”

As the Buddha was saying this, the continents of the world Endurance all quaked and opened up, and from them surged up all at once countless millions and billions of great bodhisattvas.

These bodhisattvas had golden bodies with the thirty-two marks of enlightenment and were shining with countless lights. They had been dwelling in the emptiness beneath the world Endurance, and when they heard Shakyamuni Buddha’s voice, they came forth from there.

Each of these bodhisattvas was the guide for a retinue of companions: some had trillions of companions with them, some billions, some millions, some thousands, some hundreds, some just

ten, or five, or four, or three, or two, or one. Some came alone, preferring to travel in solitude. Their numbers were beyond counting, limitless, beyond any metaphor.

After these great bodhisattvas surged up from the ground, they came to where the jeweled tower of the Buddha Many Jewels was, to where Shakyamuni Buddha was.

Arriving there, the great bodhisattvas bowed to the two buddhas, and paid homage at their lion seats under the jeweled trees. They circled the two buddhas three times and joined their palms to offer their respects. They offered the two buddhas all the forms of praise which bodhisattvas give and then stood off to the side, joyously gazing upon the two World Honored Ones.

It took fifty lesser eons for all these great bodhisattvas to surge forth and offer these two buddhas all the forms of praise bodhisattvas give. During this time, Shakyamuni Buddha sat in silence, and the whole assembly sat in silence for fifty lesser eons. But due to the spiritual power of the Buddha, the assembly thought that only half a day had passed.

At that point, also through the spiritual power of the Buddha, the monks and nuns and laymen and laywomen in the assembly saw these bodhisattvas filling up the space of countless millions of worlds.

There were four guides in this multitude of bodhisattvas. One was named Superior Practice, the second was named Boundless Practice, the third was named Pure Practice, and the fourth was named Practice Established in Peace. These four bodhisattvas were

the chiefs, the leading teachers. They stood in front of the multitude of bodhisattvas, looked upon Shakyamuni Buddha, and greeted him:

“World Honored One, may you be free of sickness and trouble and travel in peace and joy. Are those whom you must deliver accepting the teaching readily, without tiring you out?”

Then the four great bodhisattvas spoke a verse:

May you be joyous and at peace, World Honored One,
May you be free of sickness and trouble.
As you teach and transform living beings,
May you be free from fatigue.
Are these living beings accepting the teaching easily,
So they do not tire you out?

Then the Buddha said this to the multitude of bodhisattvas:
“Yes, good people, yes indeed. We who arrive at reality are joyous and at peace, free from sickness and trouble. We find living beings are easy to teach, easy to save, and we do not get tired out. Why is this?

“These living beings have already accepted the teaching lifetime after lifetime. They have served and honored the buddhas in the past and planted the roots of goodness.

“When these living beings first saw me in this body, and heard what I was teaching, they all believed it and accepted it and entered into the wisdom of the ones who arrive at reality, all except for those who practiced and studied the lesser vehicles. I will enable those

people as well to hear this sutra and enter into the wisdom of the buddhas.”

Then all the great bodhisattvas spoke a verse:

Excellent, well done, O Great Hero, O World Honored One!
All living beings are easily taught and saved –
They can inquire of the enlightened ones
And ask about their most profound wisdom.
When they hear it and then faithfully put it into practice,
We will rejoice along with them.

Then the World Honored One praised the leading bodhisattvas:
“Well done, well done, good people. You are able to generate the
mind that feels joy along with the ones who arrive at reality.”

At that moment, the bodhisattva Maitreya and a countless
multitude of bodhisattvas all thought this thought:

“We have never seen or heard of such a vast number of great
bodhisattvas surging up from the ground into the presence of the
World Honored One, saluting him, serving him, and greeting him.”

Then the bodhisattva Maitreya, knowing what was on the minds
of all these bodhisattvas, and wishing to resolve his own doubts,
joined his palms in salute and asked the Buddha a question in verse:

We have never before seen
Such a countless multitude of millions and billions of great
bodhisattvas.
We hope you will explain for us
Where they came from,

And why they have gathered together.
They are giants, with great spiritual powers –
Their wisdom is inconceivable,
Their intent is solid and strong,
They have the power of supreme patience,
Living beings are happy to see them.
Where have they come from?
Each of these bodhisattvas
Leads a retinue of companions –
Their numbers are infinite,
They are as countless as the sands.
There are some great bodhisattvas
Leading groups of trillions,
Single-mindedly seeking the Path to Enlightenment.
These great teachers with trillions of companions
Come together to serve the Buddha,
To protect and uphold this sutra.
There are even more great bodhisattvas
Leading groups of billions,
And groups of millions,
And groups of thousands,
And groups of hundreds,
Groups of fifty, groups of ten,
Or even three or two or one.

Some come alone, without companions –
They enjoy being alone.
They all have come to where the Buddha is,
Their numbers mounting higher and higher.
This great multitude is beyond reckoning –
If someone tried counting them up for countless ages,
He still would not know the total.
This multitude of virtuous ones,
These advanced bodhisattvas –
Who taught them Truth?
Who taught them and enabled them to succeed?
Whom did they follow to first develop the aspiration for
enlightenment?
What enlightened one's teaching did they propagate?
Whose sutras did they accept and uphold and act upon?
What path to enlightenment did they cultivate and practice?
All these bodhisattvas,
With their spiritual powers and the strength of their great
wisdom,
Have surged forth from the earth,
Making the ground tremble in all directions.
We have never seen such things –
O World Honored One,
Please tell us where they come from,

Tell us the name of their world.
We have traveled through all the worlds,
And we have never seen this multitude of bodhisattvas –
We do not recognize a single one of them.
Tell us the reason why
They suddenly surged forth from the earth.
Here in this assembly today
Countless bodhisattvas want to know this –
We want to know the causal basis
Of this multitude of bodhisattvas, from beginning to end.
O World Honored One, you of infinite merits,
Please resolve our doubts!

Then the buddhas that emanated from Shakyamuni Buddha came in from the countless millions of other worlds, and sat down cross-legged on the lion seats under the jewel trees on all sides.

These attendants of these emanated buddhas saw this great multitude of bodhisattvas surging up out of the earth in all the worlds of the cosmos and hovering in midair. They all said to the buddhas that they were accompanying: “Where does this infinite, endless, incalculable multitude of bodhisattvas come from?”

Then all the emanated buddhas said to their attendants: “Good people, wait a moment, and a bodhisattva named Maitreya, who has been given a prediction of enlightenment by Shakyamuni Buddha, and who later on will become a buddha himself, will ask this

question, and the Buddha will answer it, and by this means all of you will get to hear the answer.”

At that moment Shakyamuni Buddha told the bodhisattva Maitreya:

“Well done, Invincible One, that you have been able to ask me about this great event.

“All of you should join together single-mindedly, and put on the armor of dedicated spiritual focus, and generate a strong solid intent, and I will reveal for you the wisdom of the buddhas, the power of the sovereign spiritual mastery of the buddhas, the power of the buddhas that is as swift as a lion striking, the power of the buddhas that is awe-inspiring and bold and magnificent.”

Then, to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

All of you must focus your energies single-mindedly –
I am about to explain this event.
Do not harbor doubts –
The wisdom of the buddhas is inconceivable.
Now bring forth the power of faith,
Dwell in the virtue of patience –
Now you will all get to hear
What you have never heard before.
Let me put you at ease,
Do not hold to your fears and doubts.
Everything the buddhas have said is real –

Though your intelligence cannot measure it.
The supreme truth that the buddhas attain
Is very profound, and cannot be analyzed.
Now I am about to teach it to you –
You should focus single-mindedly and listen.

After speaking this verse, the World Honored One said to the bodhisattva Maitreya: “Here in this great assembly, I am informing all of you that these countless numbers of great bodhisattvas welling up out of the earth – whom you have never seen before – were all taught by me after I attained ultimate complete enlightenment here in this world Endurance. I taught them and guided them and tuned their minds, and enabled them to generate the aspiration for enlightenment.

“These great bodhisattvas dwell in the emptiness that lies beneath this world Endurance. They can recite all the sutras fluently – they have pondered them and analyzed them clearly, and they can hold them in mind correctly. They do not take pleasure in having a lot to say in crowds of people. They take pleasure in quiet places where they never stop working hard to make spiritual progress. They are not dependent on humans or celestial beings. They always enjoy profound wisdom and have nothing to block them from it. They always take joy in the teachings of the buddhas and single-mindedly focus their energies on seeking supreme wisdom.”

Then, to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

You must understand, Invincible One –

All these great bodhisattvas
Have been cultivating the wisdom of the buddhas
For countless eons.
They were all taught by me –
I enabled them to aspire to the Great Path –
They are my children.
They stay in this world,
Constantly carrying out the work of purification.
They are intent on quietude
And shun the bustle of large gatherings.
All these children of mine
Study the teachings of my path –
Day and night they constantly strive for spiritual progress,
In order to seek the Path to Enlightenment.
They dwell in the emptiness beneath the world Endurance,
The power of their intent is solid and strong –
They always work hard seeking wisdom.
As they explain all kinds of wondrous teachings
Their minds are fearless.
Sitting under the bodhi tree in the city of Gaya,
I achieved true awakening,
And began turning the wheel of the supreme teaching,
Thus teaching and transforming them,

And enabling them first to develop the aspiration for enlightenment.

Now they are all at the level from which there is no falling back,

And all of them are bound to become buddhas.

What I am saying right now is the truth –

You should wholeheartedly believe it.

Since long, long ago

I have been teaching these very same bodhisattvas.

Then doubts arose in the minds of the bodhisattva Maitreya and the countless other bodhisattvas, and they considered this message, which they had never heard before, quite strange, and they thought this:

“In such a short time, how could the World Honored One have taught this countless number of great bodhisattvas and enabled them to abide in ultimate complete enlightenment?”

So they said to the Buddha: “O World Honored One, it has only been a little over forty years since you were a prince who left your home in the palace of the Shakyas, went to the city of Gaya not far from there, sat down at your site of enlightenment, and achieved ultimate complete enlightenment.

“O World Honored One, in this short space of time, even though you are carrying out the work of a buddha on a great scale, using the power of a buddha and the merits of a buddha, how could you have taught such an innumerable group of great bodhisattvas, and enabled them to attain ultimate complete enlightenment?

“O World Honored One, even if someone were to try to count this assembly of great bodhisattvas, and kept counting for millions of eons, he could not count the total number. These bodhisattvas must have planted the roots of goodness and worked to complete the bodhisattva path and cultivated pure conduct over long ages with countless numbers of buddhas.

“What you have said would be difficult for anyone in the world to believe. It is as if a young man twenty-five years old with an unblemished complexion and black hair were to point to a one-hundred-year-old man and say, ‘This is my son,’ and the one-hundred-year-old man were to point to the young man and say, ‘This is my father – he raised me.’ This would be difficult to believe.

“It is like this for you, too. Since you attained enlightenment, it has really not been a long time. Yet this great multitude of bodhisattvas has already been hard at work making progress on the Path to Enlightenment for countless millions of eons. They have already become skilled at going into and coming out of and abiding in countless millions of meditation states. They have already attained great spiritual powers, and have already cultivated pure practices for a long time. They have already learned one after another all the virtues and have become skillful at answering questions. They have already become jewels among humans, of the type that is rare in all worlds.

“Yet today, World Honored One, you have just told us that since you attained enlightenment, you have enabled them to develop the initial aspiration for enlightenment, you have taught and guided

them, and you have enabled them to head for ultimate complete enlightenment.

“It has not been such a long time since you became a buddha, so how would you have been able to accomplish this great meritorious work?

“We have faith in what the Buddha teaches in accordance with what is right for each occasion, and we are certain that the words uttered by the Buddha are never false, and that the Buddha’s knowledge is all-encompassing.

“Nevertheless, if after your death, those bodhisattvas who have newly developed the aspiration for enlightenment hear what you have said here today, they may not be able to believe it and accept it, and this may be the cause of them doing wrong by rejecting your teaching.

“Please, World Honored One, explain this for us, and dispel our doubts, so that when people in the future hear of this, they will not have doubts.”

Then, to reiterate this meaning, the bodhisattva Maitreya spoke a verse:

In days gone by, the Buddha left his home with the Shakya
clan

And went to the city of Gaya,

Where he sat beneath the bodhi tree [and was enlightened]

—

It has not been such a long time since then.

These children of the Buddha here today
Are countless in number –
They have traveled the Path to Enlightenment for a long
time already.
They abide in the power of spiritual mastery,
They have already learned the bodhisattva path,
They are not stained by worldly phenomena,
They are like lotus flowers in the water.
They have surged forth from the earth
With reverent minds,
And now stand in the presence of the Buddha.
Such a thing is hard to conceive of –
How can we believe it?
The Buddha's enlightenment was relatively recent,
Yet he has achieved so much.
Please dispel everyone's doubts
And explain the true situation clearly.
If a hale and hearty young man of twenty-five
Pointed to a one-hundred-year-old man with white hair and
a wrinkled face
And said, "This man was brought up by me,"
And the old man said, "This is my father,"
No one in the world would believe
That the father could be younger than the son.

But what you have told us is just like this –
Your enlightenment is very recent,
But these bodhisattvas
Have been traveling the bodhisattva path
For countless ages with their intent strong and unbending.
They are skilled at answering difficult questions,
And their minds are fearless.
Their patience is decisively established,
And they are upright and virtuous.
Praised by the enlightened ones of the ten directions,
They are well able to analyze and explain.
They take no delight in crowds,
And always prefer meditative concentration.
Because they are seeking enlightenment,
They dwell in the emptiness beneath this world.
We have heard this from the Buddha,
So we have no doubts about this.
But we hope that for the sake of people in the future,
The Buddha will explain further and enable them to
understand.
If people have doubts about this sutra and do not believe it,
They will fall into evil paths.
Please explain for them right now
How, in such a short time,

You taught these countless numbers of bodhisattvas,
And enabled them to develop the aspiration for
enlightenment
And to reach the level from which there is no falling back.

Chapter 16: The Lifespan of Those Who Arrive at Reality

Then the Buddha said to the bodhisattvas and everyone in the great assembly: “Good people, you must believe and understand the true words of one who has arrived at reality.”

Then the Buddha again said to the great assembly: “Good people, you must believe and understand the true words of one who has arrived at reality.”

Then, once again, the Buddha said to the great assembly: “Good people, you must believe and understand the true words of one who has arrived at reality.”

Then the great assembly of bodhisattvas, with Maitreya at their head, joined their palms in salute and said to the Buddha: “World Honored One, please explain, and we will believe and accept the words of the Buddha.”

They repeated this three times, then again said: “Please explain, and we will believe and accept the words of the Buddha.”

Knowing that the bodhisattvas would not stop at three requests, the World Honored One said to them: “Listen carefully and hear the power of the mystic spiritual penetration of one who has arrived at reality.

“The celestial beings and humans and jealous spirits of all the worlds all think, ‘This Shakyamuni Buddha left his home in the palace of the Shakya clan, went to a place not far from the city of

Gaya, sat at the site of enlightenment, and attained ultimate complete enlightenment.’

“Good people, in reality incalculable millions of eons have already passed since I became enlightened.

“If someone were to take all the worlds in countless millions of galaxies and pulverize them into atoms, and travel through countless millions of lands placing a single atom in each land, and keep going until all these atoms were used up – what do you think, good people, could this number of worlds be calculated?”

Maitreya and the other bodhisattvas all said to the Buddha: “World Honored One, there would be a countless, endless number of worlds, an incalculable number, beyond the power of the mind to fathom. Even with their stainless wisdom, all the seekers and solitary illuminates could not conceive of this number. Even those of us in the stage beyond rebirth could not comprehend such a thing. This would be an infinite number of worlds.”

Then the Buddha said to assembly of great bodhisattvas: “Good people, now I am going to explain this to you clearly. If all these worlds were reduced to atoms, and we counted an eon for each atom, the time since I became a buddha is countless millions and billions of eons more than this.

“During all this time I have always been in the world Endurance teaching, and I have been guiding living beings in countless millions and billions of other lands, too.

“Good people, all this while, though I have spoken of various buddhas by name, and I have spoken of them entering nirvana, all

this was just making distinctions as a matter of expedient means.

“Good people, when living beings come to me, I look upon them with the eyes of a buddha, and I observe the sharpness of their faculties of faith, and so on.

“Then, according to what is necessary to save them, I speak to them in particular ways according to the circumstances. I use different names, and I may appear to be older or younger, and I may appear to speak of entering nirvana, and I may use all kinds of expedient means to explain the subtle wondrous Teaching. In this way I can enable living beings to develop the mind of joy.

“Good people, as one who has arrived at reality, I have seen that living beings take pleasure in minor teachings, that their merits are meager and their defilements heavy. I have told such people that when I was young I left home, and attained ultimate complete enlightenment. In reality, I achieved buddhahood long, long ago, but I said this as an expedient means, in order to teach such people and enable them to enter upon the Path to Enlightenment.

“Good people, the sutras set forth by those who have arrived at reality are all for the sake of bringing liberation to living beings. Sometimes they speak of their own bodies, sometimes of other bodies; sometimes they show their own bodies, sometimes they show other bodies; sometimes they describe their own doings, sometimes they describe the works of others. But everything they say is true, and without falsity.

“How can this be?

“Those who have arrived at reality perceive things as they really are and see that all the forms of the three realms [of desire, of form, and of formless states] are neither born nor die, though they seem to disappear and appear. They see there is no such thing as being in the world or being extinct. They see that these forms are neither real nor unreal, neither so nor not so – they do not perceive the three realms as those *in* the three realms see them. Those who have arrived at reality perceive these facts clearly, with no mistake about it.

“Because living beings have all sorts of natures, all sorts of desires, all sorts of activities, all sorts of thoughts and concepts, in order to enable them to develop the roots of goodness, those who have arrived at reality use various kinds of causes and conditions, metaphors and explanations, words and phrases, and teach in all kinds of ways, without ever interrupting their work as enlightened beings.

“In this way, it has already been a long, long time since I became a buddha – my lifespan is countless trackless eons, and I abide always without becoming extinct.

“Good people, the lifespan that I achieved when I originally traveled the bodhisattva path has still now not been exhausted and is many multiples of the inconceivable length of time described above.

“There will not really be final extinction here in this life, yet I announce that I am going to achieve final nirvana. As one who has arrived at reality, I use this expedient means in order to teach and transform living beings.

“Why so? If they thought that the Buddha would remain in the world forever, people of meager virtue would not plant the roots of goodness – they would become spiritually impoverished and degraded, become addicted to the five desires [for wealth, sexual pleasure, acclaim, food and drink, and sleep], and get caught in the net of vain imagination and false perceptions.

“If they believed that the Buddha would always be there and never disappear, they would be smug and feel complacent and lazy. They would be unable to conceive of how hard it is to encounter an enlightened being, and unable to generate an attitude of respect for an enlightened being.

“This is the reason that those who arrive at reality use expedient means and tell people, ‘You must realize that it is hard to get the opportunity to meet with the enlightened ones when they appear in the world.’

“Why do we do this? People of meager virtue pass through millions of eons, and they may or may not recognize an enlightened being, and for this reason, we tell them how hard it is to get to meet one who has arrived at reality. When they hear these words, they are sure to think how hard it is to encounter an enlightened being, and their minds become eager for the experience, and they hunger for an enlightened being, and so they plant the roots of goodness.

“This is why, even though we do not in reality become extinct, we who arrive at reality speak of final extinction.

“Good people, the teachings of all the enlightened ones, of all the ones who arrive at reality, are like this – they are to save living beings, and are all true, not false.

“[Here is a parallel.] Suppose there was a skilled physician, wise and intelligent, who knew how to formulate medicines and was good at curing a multitude of sicknesses. This physician had many children. For some reason, he went off to a faraway country. Some time after he left, his children drank some poison, which made them so delirious they were rolling around on the ground.

“When their father returned home, some of his children had lost their minds from drinking the poison, and some had not. When they saw their father again, they were very happy, and asked him how he was. They told him, ‘We were stupid, and by mistake we drank some poison, but we hope you will cure us, and give us back our lives.’

“The father saw how his children were in pain, and from among all his formulas, he found the right medicinal herbs, which looked good and smelled good and tasted good. He mashed them and strained them and blended a potion and gave it to his children to take, telling them: ‘This is good medicine, with a fine color and aroma and flavor. Take it right away, and it will quickly eliminate your pain so you will not suffer any more.’

“Those of his children who had not lost their minds saw this fine medicine, which looked good and smelled good, and immediately took it, and the sickness [brought on by the poison] was completely cured.

“The others, the ones who had lost their minds, although they had been happy to see their father coming, and had greeted him, would not take the medicine when he offered it to it. The poison had entered into them so deeply that they had lost their minds, so they

did not think that this medicine was wholesome, even though it had a good color and aroma.

“Their father thought this: ‘These children are in a bad way. They have been poisoned, and their minds are deranged. Even though they were happy when they saw me, and asked me to save them and cure them, they are not willing to take this fine medicine. I will have to devise some expedient to make them take the medicine.’

“So the father told them: ‘You have to realize that I am already old and weak, and it is time for me to die. Now I am leaving this fine medicine here, which you should take. Don’t worry that it will not cure you.’

“After telling them this, the father went away again. He sent back a messenger to tell the deranged children that their father had already died.

“Hearing that their father had passed away, their minds were filled with sorrow, and they thought this: ‘If our father were still here, he would feel sorry for us and we could be cured. Now he has abandoned us and perished somewhere far away.’

“Feeling themselves bereft and alone, with no one to depend on, they were saddened, and their minds suddenly become lucid. Only then did they realize that the medicine had a fine color and flavor and aroma, so they immediately took it, and the illness caused by the poison was cured.

“When the father got word that his children had all been cured, he immediately returned home to them, and they were all reunited.

“So tell me, good people, what do you think? Can anyone say that this good doctor was guilty of lying?”

The audience answered: “Definitely not.”

The Buddha said: “It is the same with me. Since I became a buddha, countless trackless eons have passed. It is for the sake of living beings that I use the power of expedient means and say that I will enter final extinction. No one can realistically say that I have committed the sin of lying.”

Then, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

From the time I attained enlightenment,
The number of eons I have traversed
Is countless thousands of millions of billions.
Always I have been setting forth the True Teaching,
Teaching and transforming innumerable millions of living
beings,
Enabling them to enter upon the Path to Enlightenment.
Thus, for countless eons,
For the purpose of saving living beings,
As an expedient means I have appeared to die and become
extinct,
Though in reality I have never become extinct –
But have abided in this teaching.
I dwell here forever
By means of the power of spiritual mastery,

In order to enable deranged living beings [to learn the True Teaching].

Although I am close at hand, they do not see me –

But when they see me dying,

They make offerings to my relics,

And they long for me and become eager [for the Teaching].

Once living beings believe and submit

With straightforward intent, they become flexible and amenable –

They become single-minded, wanting to see the Buddha,

And they do not spare their bodies or their lives [in the effort].

At times I have appeared on Vulture Peak

With an assembly of monks.

At times I tell living beings:

“I abide here forever without dying –

By the power of expedient means,

I appear to die or not to die.”

In other lands there are living beings

Who revere [the True Teaching] and believe it and take joy in it –

When I am among them, I explain the Supreme Truth.

You have not heard this,

And instead you think I will become extinct.

I see living beings sinking down into pain and affliction,

So I do not reveal myself to them,
And this makes them long for me.
Then when their minds are eager and receptive,
I appear to them and explain the teaching.
Acting like this, with the power of spiritual mastery,
Over countless eons,
I am always on Vulture Peak
And all the other places where I sojourn.
When living beings see an era ending,
And are burned in the great conflagration [at the end of the
era],
This land of mine is peaceful and secure,
And always filled with celestial beings and humans,
With gardens and groves, halls and pavilions,
Adorned with all kinds of jewels,
Jewel trees full of flowers and fruits.
[This land of mine is a place] where living beings wander
with pleasure,
Where celestial beings beat celestial drums,
And play all kinds of musical instruments,
And rain down giant flowers
Upon the Buddha and the great congregation.
My pure land is never destroyed,
But living beings see it consumed in the fires.

They are anxious, fearful, afflicted by all kinds of pain –
Such people are everywhere.
Because of their misdeeds,
Living beings who do wrong pass through trackless ages,
Never hearing of enlightened beings,
Never hearing of the teaching of enlightenment,
Never hearing of the community seeking enlightenment.
Those who cultivate merit
Become flexible and harmonious and straightforward,
And so they see my body here explaining the teaching.
Sometimes, to this group,
I say the lifespan of the buddhas is infinite.
For those who will meet a buddha only after a long time,
I say that a buddha is hard to encounter.
The power of my wisdom is like this –
The light of wisdom shines to infinity,
Its lifetime is countless ages.
It is attained by long refinement of activity.
Those of you with wisdom
Should not be in doubt about this.
Cut off your doubts and end them forever –
The words of the buddhas are true, not false.
[The buddhas are like] the doctor who was good at
expedient methods.

To cure his crazed children
He had them informed he was dead,
Though in reality he was alive –
Yet he was not telling lies.
I am like the father to the world,
Saving you from all pain and suffering.
Because ordinary people are deranged,
Though I am really always here, I say that I will become
extinct.
This is because those who think they can always see me
Will become smug and negligent –
They will let themselves go, and indulge in the five desires,
And fall into evil paths.
I always know living beings
And whether or not they are traveling the path.
According to what they require to be saved,
I expound for them all sorts of teachings.
I always have this intention in mind:
How can I enable these living beings
To gain entry to supreme wisdom
And quickly become buddhas?

Chapter 17: Distinguishing Merits

Countless numbers of living beings in the great assembly benefited greatly from hearing the Buddha explain that his lifespan was so many eons long.

Then the Buddha said to the bodhisattva Maitreya:

“When I explain that the lifespan of the ones who have arrived at reality is this long, [various kinds of beings benefit in various ways:]

“Countless living beings attain the patience that comes from realizing that phenomena are only relatively real, as the product of causes and conditions, and have no intrinsic identity.

“A thousand times as many bodhisattvas attain the ability to maintain mental command with concentration spells.

“As many great bodhisattvas as there are the atoms in a world attain the great unimpeded eloquence of joy in speaking the truth.

“Another group of great bodhisattvas as numerous as the atoms in a world attain countless millions of concentration spells.

“Another group of great bodhisattvas as numerous as the atoms of all the worlds in a galaxy become able to set in motion the Wheel of the Teaching that never goes back.

“Another group of great bodhisattvas as numerous as the atoms in two thousand lands become able to set in motion the Wheel of the Pure Teaching.

“Another group of great bodhisattvas as numerous as the atoms in four times four realms will now attain ultimate complete enlightenment after four more lifetimes.

“Another group of great bodhisattvas as numerous as the atoms in three times four realms will now attain ultimate complete enlightenment after three more lifetimes.

“Another group of great bodhisattvas as numerous as the atoms in two times four realms will now attain ultimate complete enlightenment after two more lifetimes.

“Another group of great bodhisattvas as numerous as the atoms in four realms will now attain ultimate complete enlightenment after one more lifetime.

“A group of living beings as numerous as the atoms in eight worlds now have all generated the aspiration for ultimate complete enlightenment.”

As the Buddha was speaking of these great benefits the great bodhisattvas gain from this teaching, great flowers showered down from the sky over the countless thousands of buddhas sitting on lion seats under the myriad jewel trees.

The flowers also showered down on Shakyamuni Buddha and the long-extinct Buddha Many Jewels on their lion's seats in the tower of seven jewels.

The flowers also floated down upon all the great bodhisattvas assembled there, and upon the monks and nuns and laymen and laywomen.

A fine mist of sandalwood incense also spread over the assembly.

Heavenly drums sounded in the sky, their wondrous music spreading far and wide.

All sorts of celestial garments descended from all over the sky, decorated with garlands of pearls and wish-granting gems.

The scent of priceless incense burning in censers made of jewels spontaneously filled the atmosphere, as an offering to the great assembly.

Every one of the buddhas, each accompanied by bodhisattvas holding canopies, rose in turn into the heavens.

With their wondrous voices, these bodhisattvas sang countless songs of praise to the buddhas.

At that point, the bodhisattva Maitreya rose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, joined his palms in salute, and said to the Buddha in verse:

The Buddha teaches rare truths
That we have never heard before.
The World Honored One has great power –
His lifespan cannot be measured!
Countless children of the Buddha hear him now,
Telling of the different benefits gained from the teaching,
And joy fills their bodies.
Some reach the level from which there is no falling back,

Some attain the power of mental command,
Some attain unobstructed joyful eloquence,
Some gain hundreds of millions of concentration spells.
Bodhisattvas as numerous as the atoms of the galaxy
Become able to turn the Wheel of the Teaching that never
goes back.

Bodhisattvas as numerous as the atoms of thousands of
lands

Become able to turn the wheel of the pure teaching.
Bodhisattvas as numerous as the atoms of many lands
Will complete the Path to Enlightenment after eight lifetimes.

Bodhisattvas as numerous as the atoms of four, three, or
two sets of four realms

Will become enlightened after four, three, or two lifetimes.

Bodhisattvas as numerous as the atoms of a set of four
realms

Will achieve all-knowledge after one more lifetime.

Having heard how long the lifespan of the buddhas is,

These groups of living beings

Gain immeasurable, immaculate, pure rewards.

Living beings as numerous as the atoms in eight worlds,

Hearing the Buddha explain how long he lives,

All develop the supreme aspiration [for ultimate
enlightenment].

The World Honored One has taught countless inconceivable truths,

Bringing many benefits, as many as boundless space –

Heavenly flowers rain down from the sky,

Countless celestial beings arrive from countless buddha-lands,

A fine mist of fragrant incense comes down,

Like birds flying through the empty sky,

As an offering to the buddhas.

Celestial drums send forth their wondrous sounds

Spontaneously from the sky.

Millions of celestial garments come fluttering down.

Priceless incense burns in censers of jewels,

Its subtle fragrance filling the air,

As an offering to all the buddhas.

The multitudes of great bodhisattvas,

Bearing up banners and canopies over each buddha,

Extol the buddhas with thousands of verses.

All these unprecedented marvels occur

As the assembly hears of the infinite lifespan of the buddhas,

And all rejoice.

The renown of the buddhas extends through all worlds,

Bringing benefits on a wide scale to living beings,

To enable them all to have good roots,

And to help them develop the supreme aspiration for enlightenment.

Then the Buddha said to the bodhisattva Maitreya:

“If there are living beings who hear that this lifespan of the buddhas is this long, and can understand this even for an instant, than they will gain limitless merit.

“The merit which good men and good women gain by this would be hundreds or thousands or millions of times as much merit as they would gain by cultivating, for the sake of ultimate complete enlightenment, the perfection of generosity, the perfection of discipline, the perfection of patience, the perfection of energy focus, and the perfection of meditation – that is, five of the six perfections, with the exception of the perfection of wisdom.”

Then, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

Suppose people seek enlightened wisdom for countless
eons,

Practicing the five perfections.

During these eons they make offerings to support the
buddhas,

And the solitary illuminates, and the disciples,

And all the bodhisattvas.

They give them rare delicacies, special garments, bedding.

They act as patrons and establish retreats

Adorned with gardens and groves.

They make all these donations, offering all sorts of marvels.
They take the merit from this and dedicate it to the Path to
Enlightenment.

Moreover, they uphold discipline in all its purity, without
transgression,

Seeking the Supreme Path acclaimed by all the buddhas.

They also practice patient endurance

And stay in a harmonious state,

So that even if they are assailed by myriad evils,

Their minds do not waver.

If they are looked down upon

By those who have become arrogant, imagining they own
the truth,

They are even able to put up with this.

They also work diligently to make spiritual progress,

Their intent is always solid and strong –

For countless eons, they are single-minded and never
slacken,

For countless ages they dwell in solitude,

Whether sitting or walking, they dispense with sleep and
rein in their minds.

By this means they are able to give rise to all forms of
meditative concentration –

For millions of eons they abide in peace,

And their minds do not fall into confusion.

Holding to this blessing of unifying their minds,
They want to seek the Supreme Path, to be able to say,
“I have attained all-knowledge,
I have plumbed the limits of all forms of meditative
concentration.”

Even if these people carry out these meritorious acts just
described

For hundreds and thousands and millions of eons,
Their merit will be surpassed
By good men and good women who listen to what I say
about my lifespan,

And believe it even for a moment.
If people believe it for a moment,
In the deepest level of their minds,
Without any doubts or misgivings,
This is how much merit they will have.

When all the bodhisattvas who have traveled the path for
countless ages

Hear me speak of this infinite lifespan,
They can believe it and accept it.

All these kinds of people will accept this sutra
And make this vow: “May we live forever in the future
Saving living beings,
As the Buddha is doing today –
As King of all the Shakyas,

Giving forth the lion's roar at the site of enlightenment,
Expounding the True Teaching fearlessly.
May we be honored by all in the future,
When we sit at the site of enlightenment,
Explaining the infinite lifespan of the buddhas this way too.”
People with profound minds,
Who are pure and sincere,
Who have learned a lot and can control their minds,
Who understand the words of the Buddha in their true
meaning –
Such people will have no doubts about this.

[The Buddha continued, still speaking to Maitreya:] “There is more, Invincible One. If those who hear that the lifespan of the buddhas is eternal understand the import of these words, the merit gained by these people will be limitless, and they will be able to generate the supreme wisdom of those who arrive at reality.

“This is also true of those who learn this sutra, and teach it to others, who uphold this sutra themselves, and teach others to uphold it, who write out this sutra themselves, and teach others to write it out, who make offerings to this sutra with flowers and incense and garlands and pennants and canopies and fragrant oil and lamps. These people will have boundless merit, and they will be able to develop all-knowledge.

“If good men and good women hear me saying that the lifespan of the buddhas is infinite, and decisively understand it with their deepest minds, then they will see the Buddha eternally on the

Vulture Peak, accompanied by the great bodhisattvas and surrounded by a multitude of disciples.

“They will also see this world Endurance [transformed] – with the ground made of crystal, smooth and level, with eight thoroughfares marked out with gold, and rows of jewel trees, and towers and pavilions made of precious things, inhabited by a multitude of bodhisattvas. If they are able to see this world like this, they will know this is the sign of deep decisive understanding.

“After my death, if people hear this sutra and do not reject it, if their minds joyously accord with it, you must realize that this is the sign of deep decisive understanding. This is even more true of those who read and recite it, who accept and uphold it – these people are carrying the one who arrives at reality with them.

“Invincible One, such good men and good women as these do not have to build memorials to me, or build monastic establishments, or make offerings to the monks and nuns.

“Why not? By accepting and upholding and reading and reciting this sutra, these good men and good women have already built memorials and monastic quarters and made offerings to the monks and nuns. They have already made offerings for countless millions of eons – building memorial towers of the seven precious substances as high as the heavens for the relics of the enlightened ones, draping them with banners and canopies and jewel bells and flowers and incense and garlands and perfume, offering up music and dance and singing and chanting.

“After my death, if people who hear this sutra can accept and uphold it, and write it out themselves, or teach others to write it out,

this is like building quarters for monks and nuns, like building thirty-two grand halls of fine wood elegantly decorated, as a dwelling place for a hundred thousand monastics, with gardens and groves and ponds and walkways and meditation grottos, and supplied with clothing and food and furniture and medicines and musical instruments. It is like building countless numbers of these and offering them to me and my monastic community.

“This is why I say that after my death those who accept and uphold the sutra, read it and recite it and relate it to other people, who write it out themselves or teach others to write it out, those who make offerings to the sutra – these people do not have to build memorials to me, or build monastic establishments, or make offerings to the monks and nuns.

“If there are people who can uphold this sutra, and who also practice generosity and discipline and patience and dedicate their energies to spiritual progress, and unify their minds and practice wisdom, then their virtue surpasses everything, their virtue is measureless and boundless. Their merit is like the sky, which extends without limit in all directions. Their merit is limitless, too, and they will rapidly arrive at all-knowledge.

“If there are people who read and recite and accept and uphold this sutra, and teach it to other people, who write it out themselves or teach other people to write it out, then they will also be able to build memorial towers and monastic quarters, and serve and support the communities of seekers, and acclaim the merits of the bodhisattvas in myriad ways.

“They will also explain this sutra *Lotus of Truth* to other people, following its true meaning, making use of all kinds of circumstances to do so.

“They will also be able to maintain pure discipline, and live together in harmony with other people, and be patient and free from anger, and have a strong intent, and always value meditating and achieving the various kinds of deep concentration, and dedicate themselves bravely to mastering all forms of virtue. They will have a sharp intellect and wisdom and be good at answering difficult questions.

“Invincible One, these good men and good women who accept and uphold and read and recite this sutra after my death will have all these merits, and you should realize that such people are already on the way to the site of enlightenment, and are approaching ultimate complete enlightenment under the bodhi tree.

“Invincible One, such good men and good women should be memorialized in all their activities, and all celestial beings and humans should make offerings to them as if to a memorial to the buddhas.”

Then, to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

If there are people after my death
Who are able to serve this sutra,
Their merit will be limitless, as I have just explained –
They will have rendered in full all forms of service –
They will have built memorials for the relics of the buddhas,

Adorned with the seven precious gems,
Towers high and wide, pointing to the heavens,
Hung with millions of jewel bells,
Emitting subtle sounds when the wind blows.
They will have made offerings to the memorials
For countless ages,
Offerings of flowers and perfume and garlands,
Heavenly garments and musical instruments,
With burning incense and oil lamps,
Always shining forth all around them.
Those who can uphold this sutra,
In the evil worlds when the teaching is coming to an end,
Will have already offered all these forms of service.
If they can uphold this sutra,
It will be as if the Buddha is still present,
And they used fine timber to make a dwelling place for him.
It will be as if they built thirty-two halls wondrously high,
Supplied with the finest food and wondrous garments and
bedding,
Where thousands can dwell,
With gardens and groves and ponds,
With walkways and meditation grottos,
Adorned with all sorts of decorations.
They will accept and uphold and read and recite this sutra

With a mind of faith and understanding.
They will write out this sutra and teach others to write it out,
And make offerings to the texts of the sutra.
They will scatter perfume and powdered incense,
And specially fragrant flowers,
And always burn fragrant oils.
Making offerings like these, they will gain boundless merit –
Their merit will be limitless as the sky.
There will be even more merit for those
Who both uphold this sutra
And practice generosity and discipline,
Patience and meditative concentration,
Who do not get angry and do not revile others,
Who act respectfully in temples,
And act with humility toward the monks and nuns,
Who keep their distance from self-pride –
Their merits will be immeasurable!
If you meet true teachers like these,
Who have achieved these merits,
You should scatter heavenly flowers over them,
And offer them heavenly garments.
Bow down at their feet,
And regard them as you would a buddha.
Think of them like this:

“Before long they will arrive at the place of enlightenment,
And gain the pure absolute reality,
And bring benefits on a broad scale to humans and celestial
beings.”

Wherever they sojourn,
Wherever they walk or sit or lie down or speak a verse,
There you should build a memorial –
Decorate it, and make it wondrously beautiful,
And make all sorts of offerings.
When children of the Buddha dwell in this stage
They are taking up the function of the Buddha
And are always acting within it, whatever they are doing.

Chapter 18: The Merits of Joyous Accord

At that point the great bodhisattva Maitreya said to the Buddha: “World Honored One, if good men and good women hear this sutra *Lotus of Truth* and joyously accord with it, what merits will they gain?”

He also asked the question in verse:

After the death of the World Honored One,
If those who hear this sutra
Can joyously accord with it,
How much merit will they attain?

Then the Buddha told the great bodhisattva Maitreya: “Invincible One, those who hear this sutra after my death, and reach joyous accord with it – whether they are monks or nuns or laymen or laywomen or other people with wisdom, whether they are young or old – should tell others of it insofar as they are able, whether in teaching assemblies or other places, whether in monastic settings or in the wilderness, whether in cities or towns or villages or farming hamlets. They should tell what they have heard to their parents and their kinfolk, to their friends, and to other intelligent people.

“When these people hear the sutra, they too will reach joyous accord with it, and they will in turn teach it to others, and these other people will also reach joyous accord with the sutra and communicate it further in their turn. In this way the sutra will be passed on [from person to person] until it reaches [perhaps] the fiftieth person.

“Now I will tell you about the merits of joyous accord belonging to this fiftieth person. Listen carefully to what I say.

“Picture countless billions of worlds, with all the species of living beings that inhabit them – however they are born, whether or not they have forms, whether or not they are capable of thought, whether they have no feet or two feet or four feet. Imagine this number of living beings.

“Now imagine someone seeking merit who gives all of them whatever makes them happy. Imagine this person gives every human being continents of gold and silver and precious stones, all sorts of vehicles, palaces, and towers made of jewels.

“Now, this generous donor goes on giving them gifts for eighty years, and then thinks: ‘I have given these people all the things they enjoy, whatever they like, but they are already getting old and feeble after eighty years, their hair has turned white and their faces are wrinkled, and before long they will die. I must use the teachings of the enlightened ones to instruct them.’

“So the generous person gathers together these people, and communicates to them the teachings of the enlightened ones, and instructs them and transforms them, so that they all attain the paths of those who have entered the stream, of those who have only one rebirth ahead, of those who will not return to rebirth, the paths of the worthy ones who have ended all defilements, who have mastered profound meditative concentration, who have attained the eight liberations. [\[17\]](#)

“What do you think? Would this generous person have attained a lot of merit or not?”

Maitreya said to the Buddha: “This person’s merits would be measureless and boundless. By just giving people all that they want, this generous person would have earned boundless merit, and all the more so, by enabling people to attain the fruits of the worthy ones.”

The Buddha then told Maitreya: “So let me clearly say to you now: the merit earned by enabling all the living beings in countless billions of worlds to attain the fruits of the worthy ones is not as great as the merit of that fiftieth person who hears even a single verse of the sutra *Lotus of Truth* and reaches joyous accord with it. It is not one-hundredth as much, not one-thousandth as much, not one-millionth as much. There is no mathematical metaphor for it.

“Invincible One, the merit of this fiftieth person who hears the sutra *Lotus of Truth* and reaches joyous accord with it is immeasurable, boundless, trackless. So, how much the more so, for the first person who hears the sutra in a teaching assembly and reaches joyous accord – the merit is incomparably immeasurable, boundless, incalculable.

“If, for the sake of this sutra, people go to visit teaching centers, and they stand there or sit there for a moment and hear the teaching and accept it, the merit from this will be such that in their next rebirth, these people will obtain wondrous vehicles and may even mount to heavenly palaces.

“If people are sitting in a place where the teaching is being explained, and other people come along, and they urge them to sit

down and listen, then their merit will be such that in their next rebirth, they will sit on the thrones of the rulers of the gods or the heavenly kings or the great earthly sovereigns.

“Invincible One, suppose there is someone who says to someone else, ‘There is a sutra called *Lotus of Truth* – let’s go together and listen to it,’ and the other person takes this advice and listens to the sutra for a moment.

“Then the merit of the first person will be such that in the person’s next rebirth he or she will be dwelling together with the bodhisattvas who are masters of concentration spells – with sharp intelligence and wisdom that will be undimmed for thousands of lifetimes.

“[This person will be physically intact] – with breath that smells sweet, with tongue and mouth that will be free from sickness, with teeth that will not decay or yellow or fall out or be crooked, with lips that will not droop or be contorted or get chapped or develop sores or be too crooked or too thick or too big or too dark or have anything wrong with them. This person’s nose will not be too flat or crooked. This person’s face will not be discolored or too narrow or too long or pockmarked or have any unpleasant features. This person’s lips, tongue, and teeth will all be good looking; this person’s nose will be straight; this person’s face will be round and full; this person’s eyebrows will be high and long; this person’s chin will be broad and even.

“Lifetime after lifetime, this person’s human form will be complete, and this person will meet enlightened beings and hear their teachings and faithfully accept their instructions.

“Invincible One, pay attention to this. This is how meritorious it is to urge a single person to go and listen to the True Teaching. How much the more so, to listen to the sutra wholeheartedly, read and recite it, explain it for assemblies of people, and cultivate practice according to what it teaches.”

Then, to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

Suppose a person gets to hear this sutra at a teaching
assembly,

And repeats even a single verse in joyous accord to another
person,

And the teaching is passed on like this until it reaches the
fiftieth person –

Now I will explain what merit is gained by this fiftieth person
[in the chain of transmission].

Suppose there is a generous patron,

Who provides supplies to a countless multitude of people

For a full eighty years, giving them what they want.

Seeing them now getting old and weak, with white hair and
wrinkled faces,

With teeth missing and bodies that have become frail,

The generous person thinks: “Soon these people will die –

I must give them the teaching, so they can attain the fruits of
the Path.”

So the generous person uses expedient means to teach
them

About the true reality of nirvana,
To teach them that the worldly life is not solid and secure,
That it is like a bubble, like an evanescent flame,
Telling them they must generate the mind of detachment.
The people hear this teaching and all become worthy ones,

Fully equipped with the six powers, [\[18\]](#)

The three insights, [\[19\]](#) and the eight liberations. [\[20\]](#)

The fiftieth person who finally hears

One verse of the sutra and joyously accords with it

Gains more merit even than this generous patron –

So much merit that no metaphor can explain it.

The merit of those who hear the sutra passed on like this is
limitless –

How much the more so for those at a teaching assembly

Who hear it firsthand and reach joyous accord with it!

If someone offers encouragement to another person,

And leads the other person to listen to the *Lotus of Truth* ,

Saying, this sutra is profound and wondrous,

And hard to encounter even in a thousand ages,

And the other person accepts the advice and goes to hear
the sutra

Even if for only a moment –

Then the merit earned by the first person

Can be described like this:

Lifetime after lifetime, this person will have no mouth
problems,
No missing or discolored teeth, no misshapen lips,
No physical characteristics that can be considered bad,
No dry or blackened or shortened tongue,
A nose that is well-formed and straight, a broad, even
forehead,
Facial features all correct and dignified, that people are
happy to see,
No bad breath, but rather a fine fragrance coming forth from
the mouth.
If people go intentionally to monastic establishments,
Wanting to hear the sutra *Lotus of Truth*,
And they hear it and reach joyous accord with it even for a
moment,
Their merits can be described like this –
In future lives they will be born among celestial beings and
humans.
They will have splendid vehicles, jewel palanquins,
And mount to the heavenly palaces.
If they urge people to sit down and listen to the sutra at
teaching centers,
The merit from this will be the causal basis
For them to occupy the thrones of heavenly and earthly
kings.

How much more the merit will be from listening to the sutra
with a unified mind,
And knowing how to explain its meaning and intent,
And cultivating practice according to its teachings –
The merit from this will be immeasurable.

Chapter 19: The Special Powers of Teachers

Then the Buddha said to the bodhisattva Ever Advancing:

“If good men and good women accept and uphold this sutra *Lotus of Truth* , if they read it and recite it and explain it and record it, they will achieve eight hundred special powers for the eyes, twelve hundred special powers for the ears, eight hundred special powers for the nose, twelve hundred special powers for the tongue, eight hundred special powers for the body, and twelve hundred special powers for the intellect. They will be able to use these special powers to adorn the six sense faculties, ^[21] and to make them all pure and clean.

“These good men and good women, with the physical eyes given them by their mothers and fathers purified, will see all the landscapes of all the worlds within and beyond the galaxy, everything from the lowest hell to the highest heaven. They will see all the living beings in all these worlds, and the causal patterns of their actions, the karmic results in their births – all this they will see, all this they will know.”

Then, to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

If someone sets forth this sutra *Lotus of Truth*
In a great assembly, with a fearless mind,
Listen to the merits this person achieves –
This person attains eight hundred special powers for the
eye.

Adorned with these, the eyes are completely purified.
With the eyes born of mother and father,
The person sees all the landscapes of the whole galaxy –
The towering peaks, the mountain ranges,
The vegetation, the oceans and rivers and streams.
From the lowest hell to the highest heaven,
This person sees all the living beings in these worlds –
Even without the heavenly eye, the physical eye is this
powerful.

[The Buddha continued:] “If good men and good women accept and uphold this sutra *Lotus of Truth* , if they read it and recite it and explain it and record it, they will achieve twelve hundred special powers for the ears.

“With these purified ears, they will hear everything in all the worlds within and beyond the galaxy, hear everything from the lowest hell to the highest heaven. They will hear all the speech and all the sounds – the sounds of elephants, horses, oxen, the sounds of pain and suffering, the sounds of sorrowful exclamations, the sounds of horns and drums and bells, the sounds of laughter, the sounds of speech, the sounds of men’s voices and women’s voices, the sounds of boys’ voices and girls’ voices, illicit sounds, the sounds of pain, the sounds of joy, the sounds of ordinary people, the sounds of sages, the sounds of happiness and unhappiness, the sounds of celestial beings and ocean spirits, earth spirits and celestial musicians, jealous spirits and loving spirits and spirits of eternal time , the sounds of fire, water, wind, and earth, the sounds of animals, the sounds of hungry ghosts, the sounds of monks and nuns, the

sounds of seekers and solitary illuminates, the sounds of bodhisattvas, the sounds of buddhas.

“In sum, with the physical ears given to them by their mothers and fathers purified, even without attaining the heavenly ear, they will hear all the sounds of all the worlds within and beyond the galaxy, hear everything from the lowest hell to the highest heaven. They will hear all these sounds clearly without damaging their ears.”

Then, to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

With the ears born from their parents,
Purified and free from defilement,
With these ears they will constantly hear
All the sounds in all the worlds of the galaxy:
The sounds of elephants and horses and oxen,
The sounds of bells and horns,
The sounds of lutes and harps,
The sounds of pipes,
The sounds of pure fine songs –
They will hear all these sounds without getting attached.
They will hear the voices of countless kinds of people,
Hear them all and be able to understand them.
They will hear the voices of the celestial beings,
The sounds of their subtle wondrous songs.
They will hear the voices of men and women, of boys and girls.

Among the mountains and rivers and valleys,
They will hear the voices of the cuckoos,
And hear the calls of all sorts of birds.
They will hear the bitter cries of pain
From the multitudes in hell,
And the sounds of the hungry ghosts seeking food,
Driven by hunger and thirst.
They will hear the voices of the jealous spirits,
Dwelling by the shores of the great ocean,
As they talk to each other in their booming voices.
Those who speak the True Teaching like this
Can dwell at peace among all this –
Hearing from afar these myriad sounds,
Yet without damaging their ears.
Those who speak the True Teaching
Can hear all the sounds of the birds and beasts
As they call to each other,
In all the worlds of the ten directions.
As the multitudes of monks and nuns
Chant the scriptures and explain them to people,
The teachers of the True Teaching dwell amid all of this
And hear them all.
As the bodhisattvas recite the teachings of the scriptures
And explain them to other people,

Pick out passages and explain their meanings,
The teachers of the True Teaching hear all their voices.
As the enlightened beings and great sages
Teach multitudes of living beings,
Setting forth the subtle wondrous teaching,
Amid great assemblies,
Upholding this *Lotus of Truth*,
The teachers of the True Teaching hear it all.
They hear all the sounds
Within and beyond all the worlds of the galaxy,
From the lowest hell to the highest heaven,
Without damaging their ears.
Their ears are perceptive and sharp,
And they can distinguish everything and understand it.
Such are the accomplishments of
Those up who uphold this *Lotus of Truth* –
Even without attaining the heavenly ear,
But simply using the natural ears they were born with.

[The Buddha continued:] “If good men and good women accept and uphold this sutra, if they read it and recite it and explain it and write it out, they will achieve eight hundred special powers for the nose.

“With these purified noses, they will smell all the scents in all the worlds within and beyond the galaxy – the scents of sumana flowers, jatika flowers, pineapple flowers, begonia flowers, red lotus

flowers, green lotus flowers, white lotus flowers, the scent of trees in blossom and trees bearing fruit, the scent of sandalwood, the scent of valerian, the scent of cinnamon, the mingled scents of thousands of species of plants. Whether these plants are ground up, or made into solids, or steeped in water – those who uphold this sutra, abiding in this state, will be able to distinguish them all.

“They will also recognize the scents of all kinds of living things – the scents of elephants, of horses, of oxen and sheep, the scents of men, women, boys and girls, as well as the scents of herbs and bushes and trees. Near or far, they will be able to smell all scents, and to tell them apart unerringly.

“Those who uphold this sutra, even though they are here in this world, will also smell the celestial scents of the heavens – the scents of the parijataka trees and kovidara trees, the scents of the mandarava flowers and the mahamandarava flowers, the scents of the manjushaka flowers and the mahamanjushaka flowers, the scents of sandalwood and incense, the scents of all kinds of blossoms. They will be able to smell and recognize all these heavenly scents as they mix together.

“They will also smell the scents of all the bodies of the celestial beings, the scent of the King of the Gods in his palace, his scent as he enjoys all forms of pleasure, his scent as he expounds the teaching to all the celestial beings in the heavens, his scent as he wanders through his gardens. They will also smell from afar the scents of the bodies of the other gods and goddesses. They will also smell from afar the scents of the seekers and the solitary illuminates

and the bodhisattvas, and the scents of the bodies of all the buddhas, and know where they are.

“They will smell all these scents without hurting their physical noses or confusing them, and if they wish to tell them apart and tell others about them, they will be able to remember them unerringly.”

Then, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

The people [who uphold the sutra]
Will have their noses purified.
They will smell and recognize all kinds of odors in this world,
Both fragrant and foul –
Heavenly flowers and perfumes,
Fragrant woods and spices,
All kinds of flowers and blossoms.
These people will recognize the scents of living beings,
The scents of men and women.
They will catch the scent of those propounding the True
Teaching from afar
And know where they are.
They will catch the scent of powerful kings,
Lesser kings and princes and courtiers and officials,
And know where they are.
They will catch the scent of precious jewels worn on the
body,
And treasuries of jewels hidden in the ground,

And the jewels of royal women,

And know where they are.

They will catch the scent of the ornaments people adorn
themselves with,

Their garments and necklaces,

And all the fragrances they rub themselves with,

And know their bodies.

Those who uphold the *Lotus of Truth*

Will catch the scent of the celestial beings

As they move and as they sit,

As they frolic at play and work their spiritual transformations,

And recognize them all.

Those who uphold the *Lotus of Truth*

Will catch the scent of the trees with their blossoms and
fruits,

And the aroma of fragrant oils,

And know where they all are.

They will catch the scent

Of the trees when they blossom in the mountain valleys,

And the living beings who dwell among them,

And know where they all are.

Those who uphold the *Lotus of Truth*

Will catch the scent

Of all the living beings in the mountains and in the seas

And under the ground,
And know where they all are.
They will catch the scent
Of the male and female jealous spirits and their retinues,
As they amuse themselves wrangling and arguing,
And recognize them all.
They will catch the scent
Of the lions and elephants and tigers and wolves,
Of wild oxen and water buffaloes
In the wilds, in the dangerous places,
And know where they all are.
They will catch the scent
Of pregnant women,
And recognize whether the offspring
Will be male or female or crippled or deformed.
With their power to smell scents,
They will know when a woman is first pregnant,
And whether she will give birth or miscarry,
Whether she will bring forth a fortunate child in peace and
joy.
With their power to smell scents,
They will know what men and women are thinking,
They will recognize their desires, their ignorance, their
hatred,

They will recognize when they are cultivating goodness.

They will catch the scent

Of treasures hidden in the ground,

Gold and silver and jewels filling bronze vessels,

And know they are there.

They will catch the scent

Of all sorts of necklaces whose value no one knows,

And they will know their value,

And how to unearth them and where they are located.

They will catch the scent

Of all kinds of celestial flowers and trees,

And be able to recognize them all.

They will catch the scent

Of all the heavenly palaces,

Differentiated into high, medium, and low,

And all their jewel flower adornments,

And be able to recognize them all.

They will catch the scent

Of all the heavenly gardens and groves and temples,

All the gazebos and teaching halls,

And those inside enjoying them,

And be able to recognize them all.

They will catch the scent

Of all the celestial beings,

Whatever they are doing,
Whether listening to the teaching, or enjoying the five
desires,
Whether coming or going, sitting or standing or lying down,
And be able to recognize them all.

They will catch the scent
Of the garments worn by the heavenly goddesses,
And the perfume of the fine flowers with which they are
adorned,
As they roam at play,
And be able to recognize them all.

They will catch the scent
Going upward to the Brahma heavens
Of those who go into and out of meditation states,
And be able to recognize them all.

They will catch the scent
Of those being born in the heaven of the Universal Purity of
the Sound of Light,
And on up to the highest heavens,
And of those who are sinking down out of them,
And be able to recognize them all.

Those who uphold the sutra will catch the scent
Of the renunciants constantly making spiritual progress in
the True Teaching,

Whether sitting or walking or reading or reciting the
scriptures,
Whether in the forests under the trees,
Or concentrating their spiritual energy, sitting in meditation,
And be able to recognize them all.
They will catch the scent
Of bodhisattvas with firm resolve,
Whether they are sitting in meditation or reading or reciting,
Or explaining the True Teaching to others,
And be able to recognize them all.
They will catch the scent
Of enlightened teachers wherever they are,
Honored and respected by all,
As they show compassion to the people and set forth the
teaching,
And be able to recognize them all.
They will catch the scent
Of living beings who are in the presence of the buddhas,
Hearing the sutras and rejoicing,
And cultivating practice according to the True Teaching,
And be able to recognize them all.
Those who uphold this sutra,
Even without attaining the nose of the bodhisattvas born
from immaculate reality,
Will attain the characteristics of this kind of nose in advance.

[The Buddha continued:] “If good men and good women accept and uphold this sutra, if they read it and recite it and explain it and record it, they will achieve twelve hundred special powers for the tongue.

“All flavors, whether fair or foul, delicious or disgusting, bitter or astringent, will be changed into fine flavors on their tongues, and all will taste as delicious as sweet dew.

“When they use their tongues to explain the teaching to great assemblies, their voices will come out profoundly wondrous, and the sound will be able to enter into the minds of the audience and make them all happy and joyous.

“When the gods and goddesses hear these profoundly wondrous voices, and the explanations that they set forth, they will all come to listen.

“All the male and female ocean spirits, demons, celestial magicians, jealous spirits, loving spirits, and spirits of eternal time will come closer to hear their teaching, and to offer respect and support.

“Monks and nuns and laymen and laywomen and kings and princes and their courtiers and their companions will come to hear them, and all the major and minor wheel-turning monarchs and their inner and outer retinues will come from their palaces to listen to the teaching.

“Because these bodhisattvas [who uphold this sutra] are skillful at explaining the True Teaching, all the priests and leading citizens and ordinary folk will serve them and support them all their lives.

“What’s more, the seekers and the solitary illuminates and the bodhisattvas and the buddhas will always be delighted to see them.

“Wherever these people who uphold the sutra are, the buddhas will all be standing right in front of them teaching them. They will be able to accept and uphold all the teachings of the buddhas, and they will be able to communicate them with the profoundly wondrous voice of the True Teaching.”

Then, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

The tongues of these people who uphold the sutra are
purified.

They will never taste any bad tastes –

All the food they eat will turn into sweet dew.

They will communicate the True Teaching to great
assemblies,

Using the profound, pure, wondrous voice of truth,

By means of stories of causes and conditions and
metaphoric explanations,

To guide the minds of living beings.

Those who hear them will all rejoice,

And present them with the finest offerings.

The celestial beings, the ocean spirits, the earth spirits, the
jealous spirits

Will come to them with reverent minds to hear the True
Teaching.

These people who explain the True Teaching
Want the wondrous sound of the teaching
To pervade all the worlds in the galaxy,
And they will be able to make it happen as they intend.
Greater and lesser wheel-turning monarchs,
With their retinues of retainers and princes,
Will join their hands reverently
As they constantly come to hear and accept the True
Teaching.

The celestial beings, the ocean spirits, the benevolent and
malevolent demons
Will constantly come with happy hearts to make offerings.
The King of the Gods and the King of the Demons,
The Creator of the World and the Lord of the World,
And all the multitudes of heavenly beings,
Will constantly come to where these people are.
The buddhas and their disciples
Will hear their voices as they set forth the True Teaching,
And always bear them in mind and protect them
And from time to time appear to them.

[The Buddha continued:] “If good men and good women accept
and uphold this sutra, if they read it and recite it and explain it and
record it, they will achieve eight hundred special powers for the body.

“They will get pure bodies, pure as diamond. Living beings will
be happy to see them, because their bodies will be pure.

“In these bodies of theirs will appear all the living beings in the cosmos – when they are born and when they die, whether they are high or low, beautiful or ugly, whether they are born in a good place or a bad place.

“All the creatures in all the mountain ranges will appear in their bodies. All the living beings from the lowest hell to the highest heaven will appear in their bodies.

“All the seekers and solitary illuminates and bodhisattvas and all the buddhas setting forth the True Teaching will show their physical forms within their bodies.

Then, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

The bodies of those who uphold the *Lotus of Truth*
Will be totally pure, pure as clear diamond –
Living beings will all be happy to see them.
Just as all images appear in a clear bright mirror,
These bodhisattvas see everything in the world
In their pure bodies,
Illuminated spontaneously for them alone –
Something not seen by other people.
All the types of living beings in the cosmos –
Celestial beings and humans and jealous spirits,
Hell-beings and hungry ghosts and animals –
All these images appear within their bodies.
All the heavenly palaces up to the highest heaven,

The mountain ranges that encircle continents,
The towering central peaks,
The oceans and rivers and so on –
All these appear within their bodies.
The enlightened beings and the seekers,
The disciples of the buddhas and the bodhisattvas,
Alone or in groups teaching –
All these appear in their bodies.
Though they have not yet attained
The immaculate wondrous body of reality nature,
Within their pure and clear eternal bodies
All things appear.

[The Buddha continued:] “If good men and good women after my death accept and uphold this sutra, if they read it and recite it and explain it and record it, they will achieve twelve hundred special powers for the conceptual mind.

“With this purified faculty of conceptual mind, when they hear a single verse or a single sentence, they will comprehend countless meanings. Having understood these meanings, they will be able to expound on this single verse or single sentence for a month or a year, and all that they say will follow the true meaning and intent and not contradict reality.

“When they explain ordinary worldly books, or discourses on politics and statecraft, or economics and business, they will always follow the True Teaching.

“They will comprehend all the mental constructs and psychological workings and intellectual activities of all the living beings in all planes of existence in all the worlds of the cosmos.

“Even though they have not yet attained immaculate wisdom, their faculty of conceptual mind will be this pure. Whatever they think, or calculate, or say, will all be the teaching of the buddhas, will all be genuine and true, will all be what is set forth in the scriptures of the earlier enlightened ones.”

Then, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

The conceptual minds of those who uphold the *Lotus of Truth*

Are purified and clear and sharp and free from defilement.

With these wondrous conceptual faculties,

They know all phenomena, high, medium, and low.

If they hear even a single verse,

They comprehend countless meanings.

If they explain them systematically according to the True Teaching,

They can go on for a month or a year.

They know all living beings within and beyond the world,

Whether celestial beings or ocean spirits or human beings,

Demons or hungry ghosts or spirits,

All the states of minds of all beings in the six planes of existence –

As a reward for upholding the *Lotus of Truth* ,
They know them all instantly.
Bearing in mind countless truths,
They can explain the True Teaching in countless ways,
Never forgetting anything or going wrong,
Because they uphold the *Lotus of Truth*.
They know the characteristics of all phenomena,
They recognize their logic according to their true meanings.
They master terminology and language,
And can set forth the teaching according to what they know.
What these people say
Is all the True Teaching of the earlier enlightened ones.
Because they are propounding this True Teaching,
They can go among the multitudes without fear.
The conceptual minds of those who uphold the *Lotus of Truth*
Are as pure as this.
Even though they have not yet achieved immaculate
wisdom,
Still, even before they do, they have these characteristics.
These people upholding this sutra
Abide in peace in a rare state –
All living beings rejoice in them, love and respect them.
They are able to use all kinds of skillful language,

To analyze and explain the True Teaching,
Because they uphold the *Lotus of Truth*.

Chapter 20: The Bodhisattva Who Never Looked Down on Anyone

Then the Buddha said to the bodhisattva Great Power:

“Now you should understand that if someone reviles or slanders a monk or nun or layman or laywoman who upholds the sutra *Lotus of Truth* , that person will incur a great punishment, as I discussed earlier.

“Those who uphold the sutra *Lotus of Truth* attain special powers, as described above, through the purity of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and conceptual mind.

“In ancient times, incalculable, inconceivable, trackless eons ago, there was a buddha called King with the Awe-Inspiring Voice. He was one who had arrived at reality, one worthy of being served, with correct, all-encompassing knowledge, fully illuminated, with perfect conduct, with world-transcending understanding, an unexcelled being, a master guide, a teacher of celestial beings and humans, a buddha, a world honored one.

“His era was called Beyond Decay and his land was called Great Achievement.

“In that world, the Buddha King with the Awe-Inspiring Voice taught the True Teaching to celestial beings and humans and jealous spirits.

“For those aspiring to be seekers, he set forth the teaching of the Four Truths, to take them across birth, old age, sickness and death, across to final nirvana.

“For those aspiring to solitary illumination through contemplating interdependent causation, he set forth the teaching of the Twelve Causal Links.

“For the bodhisattvas, basing himself on ultimate complete enlightenment, he set forth the teaching of the Six Ways of Transcendence through generosity, discipline, patience, dedication, meditation, and wisdom, and the ultimate wisdom of the buddhas.

“The lifespan of this Buddha King with the Awe-Inspiring Voice was trillions of eons. His authentic teaching survived in the world for a number of eons equal to the number of atoms in a continent, and the semblance of his teaching lasted in the world for a number of eons equal to the number of atoms in the whole world.

“After this buddha had finished all he did to benefit living beings, he died.

“After his authentic teaching and the semblance of his teaching had come to an end, another buddha appeared in the same world, and this buddha was also called King with the Awe-Inspiring Voice, and he too was one who had arrived at reality, one worthy of being served, with correct, all-encompassing knowledge, fully illuminated, with perfect conduct, with world-transcending understanding, an unexcelled being, a master guide, a teacher of celestial beings and humans, a buddha, a world honored one.

“This continued, buddha after buddha, through a sequence of two million billion buddhas, who all had the same name.

“After the very first Buddha King with the Awe-Inspiring Voice had passed away, and his authentic teaching had perished, during

the era of the semblance of his teaching, arrogant monks had great influence and power.

“At that time, there was a bodhisattva monk called Never Dismissive. Why was he named Never Dismissive? Whenever he met anyone, no matter whether they were monks or nuns or laymen or laywomen, he would always show them every courtesy and say this to them: ‘I deeply respect you, and I would never presume to look down arrogantly on anyone. Why? Because you are all traveling the bodhisattva path, and you will become buddhas.’

“This monk Never Dismissive did not specialize in reading and reciting the scriptures. He practiced courtesy, to the extent that when he saw anyone even far away, he would go over to them and bow to them and praise them and tell them: ‘I cannot slight you – you are going to become buddhas.’

“There were some who got angry, some whose minds were unclean, who would revile him and say, ‘Where does this ignorant monk come from, saying he will not slight us, and telling us we will become enlightened? We don’t need these false predictions!’

“This went on through the years, and the monk Never Dismissive was often reviled, but he never got angry, and he would always tell them, ‘You will become buddhas.’ When he spoke these words, people would sometimes beat him or throw stones at him and drive him away.

“He would withdraw a bit to get away from them, and then still call out to them in a loud voice, ‘I cannot slight you – you are going to become buddhas.’ Because he always said this, the arrogant

monks and nuns and laymen and laywomen gave him the nickname 'Never Dismissive.'

"When this monk was about to die, he heard coming, out of the air, two hundred million verses of the sutra *Lotus of Truth* as it was first spoken by the Buddha King with the Awe-Inspiring Voice. He was able to accept and uphold all of it, and so he immediately attained the purity of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and conceptual mind, as described above.

"After he attained this purity of the six faculties, his lifespan was increased by thousands of years, and he taught the sutra *Lotus of Truth* to people on a broad scale.

"Then the arrogant monks and nuns and laymen and laywomen who had given him the nickname 'Never Dismissive' out of contempt for him, saw that he had attained great spiritual powers, the power of eloquence and joy in teaching, and the power of great stillness. When they heard what he was teaching, they were all won over, and believed him, and became his followers.

"This bodhisattva Never Dismissive went on to teach millions of people and enable them to abide in ultimate complete enlightenment. After he died, he got to meet two billion buddhas, who all were named Bright Light of the Sun and Moon. In their teaching assemblies he set forth this sutra *Lotus of Truth* .

"With this causal basis, he was able to meet two billion more buddhas, who all shared the same name, King of the Light of Independence. In the teaching assemblies of these buddhas he received and upheld and read and recited this sutra and taught it to monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen, and thus he acquired

perpetual purity of the faculties of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and conceptual mind. With a fearless mind, he expounded the True Teaching to monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen.

“This bodhisattva Never Dismissive served all these buddhas, respected and honored and praised them, and planted good roots.

“With this causal basis, he was able to meet billions more buddhas, and in their teaching assemblies, too, he set forth this sutra *Lotus of Truth* . When his merits were fully accomplished, he became a buddha.

“What do you think, Great Power? Could the bodhisattva Never Dismissive in those times have been anyone else? He was an incarnation of me.

“If, in former lifetimes, I had not accepted and upheld and read and recited this sutra, and taught it to other people, I would not have been able to attain ultimate complete enlightenment as rapidly as I did.

“It was because, in the presence of the earlier buddhas, I accepted and upheld and read and recited this sutra, and taught it to other people, that I rapidly attained ultimate complete enlightenment.

“It was because those monks and nuns and laymen and laywomen in those times hated me and despised me, that they went through two billion eons without ever encountering a buddha, or hearing the True Teaching, or seeing a genuinely religious person. Instead, they spent a thousand eons in endless hell, suffering great torment.

“When they had finished with their punishment, they again encountered the bodhisattva Never Dismissive, and he taught and transformed them so that they were able to be enlightened.

“What do you think, Great Power? Could those monks and nuns and laymen and laywomen in those times who constantly looked down upon the bodhisattva Never Dismissive have been anyone else? They are none other than the five hundred bodhisattvas and five hundred monks and nuns and five hundred laymen and laywomen in this assembly here today, who have now arrived at the level where they will not fall back from ultimate perfect enlightenment.

“You must understand that this sutra *Lotus of Truth* brings great benefits to all the bodhisattvas and can enable them to arrive at ultimate perfect enlightenment.

“This is why, after my death, all the bodhisattvas must always accept and uphold and read and recite this sutra, and explain it to others, and copy it out.”

Then, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

In the past there was a buddha
Called King with the Awe-Inspiring Voice.
His spiritual powers and wisdom were immeasurable.
He guided all living beings.
Celestial beings and humans, ocean spirits and earth spirits
Came together to serve him.

When this buddha passed away,
And his teaching was about to come to an end,
There was a bodhisattva named Never Dismissive.
The monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen of that time
Were attached to their own ideas of the teaching.
The bodhisattva Never Dismissive
Would go to where they were and say to them:
“I do not look down on you.
You are practicing the Way,
And you will become buddhas.”
When they heard him say this,
People despised him and reviled him,
But the bodhisattva Never Dismissive
Accepted it patiently.
When this punishment was over,
And he was approaching the end of his life,
He got to hear this sutra,
And his six sense faculties were purified.
By virtue of his spiritual powers,
His lifespan was extended,
And he taught this sutra to other people on a wide scale.
Those people who had been attached to their own ideas of
the teaching
Received the benefit of this bodhisattva,

And were successfully taught and transformed,
And led to dwell in the Path to Enlightenment.
After Never Dismissive reached the end of this lifetime,
He met with innumerable buddhas,
And because he had taught this sutra,
He attained infinite blessings.
Gradually, he became fully equipped with all the right
 qualities,
And rapidly consummated the Path to Enlightenment.
The bodhisattva Never Dismissive of that time
Was an incarnation of me.
The monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen of that time
Were attached to their own ideas of the teaching,
But when they heard Never Dismissive say,
“You will become buddhas,”
By means of this causal basis,
They got the chance [in subsequent lives] to meet countless
 buddhas.
They are the five hundred bodhisattvas in this assembly,
And the monks and nuns and laymen and laywomen here
 today –
The men and women of pure faith
Who are in my presence right now listening to the True
 Teaching.
In past lifetimes I urged all these people

To listen to and accept this sutra,
The supreme teaching.
I showed it to people and taught them,
To enable them to abide in nirvana
And to accept and uphold this sutra lifetime after lifetime.
After millions and billions of eons,
An inconceivable length of time,
Now at last they get to hear this sutra *Lotus of Truth*.
Over millions and billions of eons,
An inconceivable length of time,
The buddhas, the world honored ones,
Have taught this sutra at certain times.
So those who travel the Path after the death of a buddha,
And who hear this sutra,
Should not give rise to doubt and confusion.
They must focus their minds,
And teach this sutra on a wide scale,
So that they will encounter buddhas, lifetime after lifetime,
And rapidly consummate the Path to Enlightenment.

Chapter 21: The Spiritual Powers of Those Who Arrive at Reality

At that time, as many great bodhisattvas as there are atoms in a thousand worlds surged forth out of the ground and came into the presence of the Buddha. With one accord they joined their palms together in salute and looked upon the visage of the Buddha and said to him:

“World Honored One, after you are dead, in lands where your emanations are present, and in places where they have become extinct, we will teach this sutra on a broad scale.

“Why will we do this? We ourselves all want to attain the true, pure, great teaching. We wish to accept and uphold it, to read and recite it, to explain it and record it, and to serve it.”

Then, in the presence of Manjushri and the others, the countless millions of great bodhisattvas who had long dwelt in the world Endurance, and in the presence of all the monks and nuns and laymen and laywomen, and in the presence of the celestial beings and ocean spirits, earth spirits and celestial musicians, jealous spirits and loving spirits and spirits of eternal time – in the presence of all the humans and nonhumans – the World Honored One manifested his great spiritual powers.

He extended his long broad tongue up to the Brahma Heaven.

From every pore he sent forth infinite rays of colored light, which illuminated all the worlds of the ten directions.

All the emanated buddhas sitting around the Buddha on their lion thrones under the jewel trees also did the same thing, extending their long broad tongues and sending forth infinite rays of light.

Shakyamuni Buddha and the other emanated buddhas under the jewel trees manifested these spiritual powers for a full one hundred thousand years and then pulled their tongues back into their mouths.

Then, all at once they coughed and snapped their fingers, and these two sounds traveled through all the buddha-worlds in the ten directions.

The ground shook, and all the living beings in those worlds – celestial beings and ocean spirits, earth spirits and celestial musicians, jealous spirits and loving spirits and spirits of eternal time – all the humans and nonhumans all saw these endless millions and billions of buddhas sitting in the world Endurance beneath the jewel trees on their lion thrones.

They also saw Shakyamuni Buddha and the Buddha Many Jewels sitting on their lion thrones in the jeweled tower.

They also saw the countless millions of great bodhisattvas surrounding Shakyamuni Buddha, and the multitudes of monks and nuns and laymen and laywomen circling around him.

When they saw this, all these living beings felt great joy at having experienced something they had never experienced before.

Then, from space came the voices of the celestial beings saying:

“Countless numbers of worlds from here there is a world called Endurance, and in it there is a buddha whose name is Shakyamuni. Right now he is setting forth a sutra of the Great Journey called *Lotus of the Wondrous Truth* , imparting the teaching for bodhisattvas that is protected by the enlightened ones.

“All of you should rejoice deep in your minds, and you should go pay your respects to Shakyamuni Buddha and make offerings to him.”

When the multitude of living beings heard this voice coming from space, they joined their palms together and faced the world Endurance and said; “Hail to Shakyamuni Buddha! Hail to Shakyamuni Buddha!”

Then, from afar, they scattered all kinds of flowers, incense, necklaces, pennants, canopies, and precious ornaments over the world Endurance. These things they scattered came toward Endurance from the ten directions, like clouds coming together to form a covering decked with jewels, over all the buddhas in that world.

At that moment, all the worlds in the ten directions interpenetrated without obstruction, as if they were a single buddha-land.

At that time, the Buddha said to the bodhisattva Higher Practice and all the other bodhisattvas:

The spiritual powers of the buddhas are like this – boundless, infinite, inconceivable.

“If I were to use these spiritual powers in order to describe the virtues of this sutra as I entrusted it to you, even if I went on for countless millions and billions of trackless eons, I still would not be able to describe them completely.

“In essence, all the teachings of the ones who arrive at reality are communicated and revealed in this sutra: all the sovereign spiritual powers of the ones who arrive at reality, all the innermost essential treasures of the ones who arrive at reality, all most profound workings of the ones who arrive at reality.

“Therefore, after I die, all of you should single-mindedly accept and uphold this sutra, read it and recite it and explain it and record it, and cultivate practice according to its teachings.

“If there are people in any land who accept and uphold this sutra, who read it and recite it and explain it and record it, and who cultivate practice according to its teachings, no matter where they do this – in a library of scriptures, in a garden, in a forest grove, in a monastery or in the abodes of laypeople, in a palace or in a lecture hall, in the mountain valleys or in the wilderness – wherever they do these things, they should be commemorated and served.

“Why so? You must know that all these are holy places, places where the way of the buddhas is being put into effect, places where buddhas attain ultimate complete enlightenment, places where buddhas turn the Wheel of the True Teaching, places where buddhas arrive at final nirvana.”

Then, in order to reiterate this meaning, the World Honored One spoke a verse:

The buddhas, the ones who come to save the world,
Abide in their great spiritual powers
To bring delight to living beings.
They manifest infinite spiritual powers –
Their tongues reach to the Brahma Heaven,
Their bodies send forth innumerable lights.
They manifest these wonders
For those who seek the Path to Enlightenment.
The sounds of the buddhas coughing,
The sounds of the buddhas snapping their fingers,
Resound through the worlds of the ten directions,
And all the lands tremble.
Because there are those who will be able
To uphold this sutra after the Buddha's death,
All the enlightened ones rejoice
And display infinite spiritual powers,
To entrust this sutra to posterity.
The Buddha praises those who accept and uphold it –
Though he praises them for countless eons,
He still cannot praise them enough.
The merits of the people who do this
Are boundless and inexhaustible –
They are like space extending in ten directions,
Without any boundary or limit.

Those who can uphold this sutra
Have already seen me and the Buddha Many Jewels
And all the buddhas emanating from me.

They also see me here today
Teaching all these bodhisattvas.

Those who can uphold this sutra
Make me and my emanation bodies and
The long-extinct Buddha Many Jewels
All rejoice.

These people will meet and serve
All the buddhas of all the worlds in the ten directions
Of the past, present, and future
And make them rejoice too.

The innermost essential True Teaching,
Attained by all the buddhas at the site of enlightenment,
Will also be attained before long
By those who are able to uphold this sutra.

Those who can uphold this sutra
Will take endless delight in explaining
The meanings of all the true teachings
And their terms and expressions –
They will be like the wind blowing through the sky,
Totally unobstructed.

After I am dead,

They will understand the sutras taught by the Buddha,
Their causal nexus, their progression,
And explain them accurately, according to their true
meanings.

Like the light of the sun and moon dispelling all darkness,
These people will travel through the world
Putting an end to the darkness that enshrouds living beings,
Teaching infinite numbers of bodhisattvas,
So that ultimately they can dwell in the One Journey.

Therefore, the wise,
When they hear of the advantages of this meritorious
conduct,

Should accept and uphold this sutra after I am gone.
People who do this will certainly have no doubts
On the Path to Enlightenment.

Chapter 22: Entrusting the Teaching

At that time, Shakyamuni Buddha rose from the teacher's seat. Displaying his great spiritual powers, with his right hand he rubbed the heads of the countless great bodhisattvas, and said this:

“For countless millions of trackless eons, I have striven and practiced to reach the goal of the teaching of ultimate complete enlightenment, which is hard to attain.

“Now I entrust it to all of you. You must single-mindedly propagate this teaching and cause it to spread.”

He rubbed the bodhisattvas' heads three times, as he repeated these words.

“For countless millions of trackless eons, I have striven and practiced to reach the goal of the teaching of ultimate complete enlightenment, which is hard to attain.

“Now I entrust it to all of you. You must single-mindedly propagate this teaching and cause it to spread.”

The Buddha then continued:

“You must accept and uphold this teaching, and communicate it widely, so that all living beings get the chance to hear it and understand it.

“Why? We who have arrived at reality have great compassion – we are not stingy, and we have no fear. We can give living beings the wisdom of the enlightened ones, the wisdom of the ones who arrive at reality, the spontaneous inherent wisdom. The ones who

have arrived at reality are the great patrons and benefactors of all living beings.

“You should all learn the teachings of the ones who arrive at reality. Never be stingy with these teachings. If there are good men or good women in the future who have faith in the wisdom of the ones who arrive at reality, you should teach them this sutra *Lotus of Truth* and enable them to understand it, and thereby enable these people to attain the wisdom of the buddhas.

“If there are people who do not believe or accept the *Lotus of Truth* , you should teach them some of the other profound teachings of the ones who arrive at reality, so they can benefit from them and take joy in them.

“If you are capable of doing this, then you will already have repaid the benevolence of the buddhas.”

As the great bodhisattvas heard what the Buddha was saying, great joy permeated their bodies. They bowed to the Buddha with even more respect and reverence, and joined their palms in salute and said to him:

“We will diligently carry out your instructions, World Honored One. Please do not worry.”

The great bodhisattvas repeated this three times:

“We will diligently carry out your instructions, World Honored One. Please do not worry.”

Then Shakyamuni Buddha sent the buddhas who emanated from him in all the worlds of the ten directions back to their own

lands, saying this:

“May you all be at peace wherever you are. And let the tower of the Buddha Many Jewels be as it was before.”

As the Buddha said these words, all who heard what the Buddha said – the countless emanation buddhas from the ten directions sitting on their lion thrones under the jewel trees, the Buddha Many Jewels, the bodhisattva Higher Practice and all the countless multitude of other bodhisattvas, Shariputra and the other seekers, and the monks and nuns and laymen and laywomen, and all the celestial beings and humans and jealous spirits and other beings in the world – all of them were filled with great joy.

Chapter 23: The Deeds of the Bodhisattva Medicine King

Then the bodhisattva Astral King Flower Insight said to the Buddha:

“World Honored One, why does the bodhisattva Medicine King roam through the world Endurance? This bodhisattva Medicine King has undertaken so many difficult missions – it would be good if you could explain this a little.

“All the celestial beings and ocean spirits, the earth spirits and celestial musicians, the jealous spirits and loving spirits and spirits of eternal time – all the humans and nonhumans – as well as all the bodhisattvas who have come from other lands, and this assembly of seekers, will all be happy to hear this.”

Then the Buddha told the bodhisattva Astral King Flower Insight:

“In the past, countless eons ago, there was a buddha called Pure Light and Virtue of the Sun and Moon. He was one who had arrived at reality, one worthy of being served, with correct, all-encompassing knowledge, fully illuminated, with perfect conduct, with world-transcending understanding, an unexcelled being, a master guide, a teacher of celestial beings and humans, a buddha, a world honored one.

“That buddha had a congregation of eight billion great bodhisattvas, as well as a great multitude of seekers of personal salvation, countless as the sands. His lifespan was forty-two

thousand eons, and the lifespan of these bodhisattvas was the same.

“In his land there were no stigmatized people, no hell-beings or hungry ghosts or animals or jealous spirits – there were no problems. The ground was as level as the palm of a hand, and made of clear crystal. The land was adorned with jewel trees, covered with jewel canopies, hung with banners of jewels. The frontiers were ringed all around with jewel vases and incense censers. There were terraces made of jewels, and each one had a tree a bowshot away.

“Under these jewel trees were sitting bodhisattvas and seekers of personal salvation.

“On each the jewel terraces there were billions of celestial beings playing celestial music and singing songs as an offering to the Buddha Pure Light and Virtue of the Sun and Moon.

“At that time, the Buddha Pure Light and Virtue of the Sun and Moon taught the sutra *Lotus of Truth* to the bodhisattva Delightful for All Beings to See and to all these bodhisattvas and seekers of personal salvation.

“This bodhisattva Delightful for All Beings to See enjoyed practicing austerities. He dedicated himself single-mindedly to seeking enlightenment for a full twelve thousand years, following the teaching of the Buddha Pure Light and Virtue of the Sun and Moon, and he attained the concentration state in which all physical bodies are manifested.

“After he attained this concentration state, his mind was overjoyed, and he thought this: ‘I have attained the concentration

state in which all physical bodies are manifested – this is all due to the power of hearing the sutra *Lotus of Truth* . I must now make an offering to the Buddha Pure Light and Virtue of the Sun and Moon and to the sutra *Lotus of Truth* .’

“He then entered into that concentration state, and as an offering to the Buddha, he caused celestial flowers to rain down from the sky and clouds of fragrant incense to cover the sky. He caused the most precious perfume to rain down, perfume so costly that six grains are worth the price of the entire world Endurance.

“Having made these offerings, he arose from his concentration state and thought to himself: ‘Though I have made offerings to the Buddha by means of my spiritual powers, it would be better to offer up my body itself.’

“So he drank a potion made of all kinds of incense and flower essences for twelve thousand years, and then anointed himself with fragrant oils. In the presence of the Buddha Pure Light and Virtue of the Sun and Moon, he wrapped his body in a robe made of celestial jewels and poured fragrant oil over himself. Then, by the power of his spiritual powers and his vows, he set fire to his body.

“The light from the fire illuminated countless billions of worlds, and the buddhas of these worlds all praised him simultaneously saying:

“ ‘Excellent, excellent good man! This is true dedication, this is a true offering to the ones who have arrived at reality.

“ ‘It cannot be matched by offerings of things like flowers, incense, heavenly silks, banners, canopies, perfumes. It cannot be

matched by giving away one's lands or cities or spouses or children.

“ ‘This is the highest form of giving. Among all forms of giving, this is the most honorable, this is the highest, because it is a true offering to the ones who have arrived at reality.’

“Having said this, the buddhas fell silent.

“The body of this bodhisattva Delightful for All Beings to See burned for twelve hundred years, until it was finally completely consumed.

“Having made this true offering, this bodhisattva Delightful for All Beings to See was born again into the land of the Buddha Pure Light and Virtue of the Sun and Moon in the family of the King Pure Virtue. He was born suddenly, by transformation, sitting cross-legged.

“To his father, the king, he spoke a verse:

O Great King, you should know –
I was passing through that place
And immediately I attained
The concentration state of manifesting all bodies.
As I worked hard and made great spiritual progress,
I renounced the body I cherished,
As an offering to the World Honored One,
In order to seek supreme wisdom.

“After speaking this verse, he said to his father: ‘The Buddha Pure Light and Virtue of the Sun and Moon is still present now as he was before. After making an offering to that buddha, I attained the

mental command to understand the speech of all living beings. I heard this sutra *Lotus of Truth* and its countless numbers of verses.

“ ‘O Great King, now I will go back and make offerings to that buddha.’

“After saying this, he sat on a dais made of the seven precious jewels, and rose up into the air several hundred feet, and then went to where the Buddha Pure Light and Virtue of the Sun and Moon was, and bowed down before him. He touched his fingertips together and spoke a verse in praise of the Buddha:

Your face is so wondrous,
With its light shining across the ten directions –
I have made offerings to you in the past,
And I come back to see you again.

“Then, after speaking this verse, the bodhisattva Delightful for All Beings to See said to the Buddha: ‘World Honored One, you are still in the world as you were before.’

“Then the Buddha Pure Light and Virtue of the Sun and Moon told the bodhisattva Delightful for All Beings to See:

“ ‘Good man, the time of my nirvana has come, the time of my demise has arrived. Please arrange a bed for me. Tonight I will have my final nirvana.’

“He also gave the bodhisattva Delightful for All Beings to See these final instructions:

“ ‘Good man, I entrust the true teachings of the buddhas to you and all the bodhisattvas and great disciples, and I bequeath to you

the teaching of ultimate complete enlightenment. I entrust to you all the precious worlds throughout the cosmos, with their jewel trees and jewel terraces, and their attendant deities.

“ ‘All my relics I also place in your care after I am dead. You should distribute them and make offerings to them, and you must build thousands of memorial towers [to house them].’

“Having given these final instructions to the bodhisattva Delightful for All Beings to See, the Buddha Pure Light and Virtue of the Sun and Moon entered nirvana in the final hour of the night.

“The bodhisattva Delightful for All Beings to See was very sad at seeing the final extinction of Buddha Pure Light and Virtue of the Sun and Moon, and thought of him fondly.

“He built a fire of incense as an offering to the Buddha’s body, and then set it alight. After the fire had burnt out, he collected together the relics. He made eighty-four thousand jeweled urns for the relics, and built eighty-four thousand memorial towers to house them. Each tower was as high as three worlds, adorned with flagpoles and hung with banners and canopies and a multitude of jewel bells.

“Then the bodhisattva Delightful for All Beings to See thought to himself: ‘Though I have made these offerings, my mind is not yet satisfied. I should make further offerings to the relics.’

“So he spoke to the bodhisattvas and great disciples and the celestial beings and earth spirits and to all living beings and told them: ‘All of you should focus your minds and pay attention: I will

now make an offering to the relics of the Buddha Pure Light and Virtue of the Sun and Moon.’

“After saying this, in front of the eighty-four thousand memorial towers, as an offering to the Buddha, he set his arms ablaze – arms adorned with the marks of a hundred blessings – and they burned for seventy-two thousand years.

“This caused countless multitudes of people to become seekers and to generate the aspiration for ultimate complete enlightenment, and it also enabled them to dwell in the concentration state where all physical bodies are manifested.

“At that point, all the bodhisattvas and celestial beings and humans and jealous spirits and other living beings felt sadness and sorrow to see the bodhisattva Delightful for All Beings to See without arms, and said this:

“ ‘The bodhisattva Delightful for All Beings to See is our teacher. He has taught us and transformed us, and now he has burned off his arms, and his body is no longer complete.’

“Then the bodhisattva Delightful for All Beings to See made this vow to the assembly: ‘I have relinquished my arms, and I will surely attain the golden-colored body of a buddha. If this is true and not false, it will cause both my arms to be restored.’ As he finished speaking his vow, his arms were spontaneously restored. This was brought about by purity and depth of the bodhisattva’s merits and wisdom.

“At that moment, all the worlds in the cosmos trembled. Jewel flowers rained down from the skies, and all humans and celestial

beings experienced something they had never experienced before.”

The Buddha told the bodhisattva Astral King Flower Insight:

“What do you think? Who else could the bodhisattva Delightful for All Beings to See have been? He was the present bodhisattva Medicine King. He relinquished his body and gave it away like this countless billions of times.

“If someone who aspires to ultimate complete enlightenment can burn off a finger or a toe as an offering at a buddha’s memorial, this surpasses offerings of kingdoms and cities, and spouses and children, and all the precious things in the mountains and forests and rivers and lakes of all the worlds in the cosmos.

“If someone were to fill all the worlds in the cosmos with the seven precious gems and offer this to the buddhas and bodhisattvas and solitary illuminates and worthy ones, the merit attained by this person would not equal the merit of one who accepted and upheld even a single line or verse of this sutra *Lotus of Truth* .

“Just as among all the rivers and streams and bodies of water, the ocean is preeminent, so too, among all the sutras spoken by those who arrive at reality, this sutra *Lotus of Truth* is the deepest and greatest.

“Just as among all the mountains, the Great Polar Mountain is preeminent, so too, among all the sutras spoken by those who arrive at reality, this sutra *Lotus of Truth* is the highest.

“Just as among all the stars visible in the sky, the moon is preeminent, so too, among all the millions of kinds of teachings, this sutra *Lotus of Truth* shines the brightest.

“Just as the sun can dispel all kinds of darkness, so too, this sutra *Lotus of Truth* can break through the darkness of all kinds of evil.

“Just as among all the minor kings, the Wheel-Turning Sage King is preeminent, so too, among all the sutras, this sutra *Lotus of Truth* is the most honored.

“Just as Lord Shakra is the king of the desire heavens, so too, among all the sutras, this sutra *Lotus of Truth* is the king.

“Just as [the creator god] Brahma is the father of all living beings, so too, this sutra *Lotus of Truth* is the father of all those good people who are still learning and those who are beyond learning and all those who aspire to be bodhisattvas.

“Just as among the common people, the foremost are those who have entered the stream [of enlightenment], those who have only one rebirth to go, those who are in their final lifetimes, those who have conquered the passions, and those who have achieved illumination by contemplating cause and effect, so too, among all the sutras taught by the ones who have arrived at reality, whether to bodhisattvas or to seekers of personal salvation, this sutra *Lotus of Truth* is preeminent.

“In the same way, those who can accept and uphold this sutra are preeminent among all living beings.

“Just as among seekers of personal salvation and those who have achieved illumination by contemplating cause and effect, the bodhisattvas are preeminent, so too, among all the sutras, this sutra *Lotus of Truth* is preeminent.

“Just as the Buddha is king of all the teachings, so too, this sutra *Lotus of Truth* is king of all the sutras.

“This sutra *Lotus of Truth* can save all living beings. This sutra can enable all living beings to detach from all forms of affliction. This sutra can bring great benefit to all living beings and let them fulfill their vows.

“This sutra *Lotus of Truth* is like a clear cool pool of water that can quench everyone’s thirst.

“When people find this sutra, it is like people who are cold finding a fire, like people who are naked getting clothes, like merchants finding customers, like children finding their mother, like travelers finding a ferry to cross a river, like sick people finding a doctor, like people in the dark finding a lamp, like paupers finding a precious jewel, like traders finding the sea.

“This sutra is like a great beacon dispelling the darkness.

“This sutra *Lotus of Truth* can enable living beings to detach from all forms of sickness and suffering. It can free them from the bonds of birth and death.

“If people get to hear this sutra *Lotus of Truth* , and record it themselves, or cause others to record it, the merit which they attain is impossible even for the wisdom of the buddhas to measure.

“If people write out this sutra and make offerings to it of flowers and incense and necklaces and banners and canopies and garments and fragrant oil lamps, the merit which they attain is limitless.

“If men hear this chapter of the sutra, “Deeds of the Bodhisattva Medicine King,” they will also attain boundless, immeasurable merits.

“If women hear this chapter of the sutra, “Deeds of the Bodhisattva Medicine King,” and are able to accept it and uphold it, after this incarnation they will no longer be reborn [being considered inferior] as women.

“For five hundred years after my death, if there are women who hear this sutra and cultivate practice according to its teachings, when their lives end, they will go directly to the world Peaceful Bliss, and dwell among the great bodhisattvas who surround Amitabha Buddha. They will be born from lotus flowers, and sit on jewel seats, and never again be disturbed by desire or anger or arrogance or jealousy.

“They will attain the spiritual powers of the bodhisattvas, and the patience that comes from knowing that all phenomena are fundamentally unborn.

“Having attained this form of patience, their eyes will be pure and clear, and with these pure eyes, they will see countless billions of enlightened ones who have arrived at reality.

“At that point, the buddhas will praise them from afar, saying:

“ ‘Well done, good people, well done! You were able to follow the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha and accept and uphold and read and recite and contemplate this sutra, and explain it to others.

“ ‘The merit which you have attained is boundless and limitless – fire cannot burn it and water cannot drown it. Your merit is such

that even a thousand buddhas together could not describe it fully.

“ ‘You have already been able to smash the thieving demons of delusion and defeat the armies of birth and death and obliterate all other enemies.

“ ‘Good people, a hundred thousand buddhas are protecting you with their spiritual powers. There are none to match you in the world of celestial beings and humans. Except for those who have arrived at reality, none of the seekers of salvation or the solitary illuminates or even the bodhisattvas can equal you in wisdom and concentration.’

“This is the power of merit and wisdom achieved by these bodhisattvas.

“If people hear this chapter of the sutra, “Deeds of the Bodhisattva Medicine King,” and they accord with it and feel joy and praise its virtues, in their present lifetime the scent of blue lotus will always issue forth from their mouths, and the fragrance of fine sandalwood will come from the pores of their bodies, and the merits they attain will be as described above.

“Therefore, Astral King Flower Insight, I entrust this chapter, ‘Deeds of the Bodhisattva Medicine King,’ to you. For five hundred years after my death, communicate it widely in these lands, and do not let it be cut off – do not let the demons of delusion have their way.

“Use your spiritual powers to preserve and protect this sutra. Why should you do this? This sutra is good medicine for the sicknesses of the people of the lands of this continent. If they are

sick and get to hear this sutra, their sicknesses will be removed and they will not grow old or die.

“If you meet people who accept and uphold this sutra, you must make an offering to them by scattering blue lotuses filled with powdered incense over them, and then think: ‘Before long these people will take their places at the site of enlightenment and defeat the armies of delusion. They will sound the trumpet of the True Teaching, and beat the great drum of the True Teaching, and deliver all living beings from the ocean of old age, sickness, and death.’

“Those who are seeking the Path to Enlightenment should act like this, and feel respect, when they meet people who accept and uphold this sutra.”

When the Buddha set forth this chapter, “Deeds of the Bodhisattva Medicine King,”, eighty-four thousand bodhisattvas attained the mental command to understand the speech of all living things.

From within the jeweled tower, the Buddha Many Jewels praised the bodhisattva Astral King Flower Insight saying:

“Well done, well done! You have achieved inconceivable merits, and thus you are able to ask Shakyamuni Buddha about such things, to the benefit of countless living beings.”

Chapter 24: The Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound

At that time, Shakyamuni Buddha sent forth a light from the mark of greatness on his head, and also sent forth a light from the white hair between his eyebrows. The light shined everywhere throughout countless billions of buddha-worlds in the east.

Beyond all these worlds, there was a world called Adorned with Pure Light. In this world there was a buddha called Pure Flower Astral King Wisdom. He was one who had arrived at reality, one worthy of being served, possessed of correct all-encompassing knowledge and fully equipped with enlightened action, one who has gone beyond worldly concerns, a liberated one, an unsurpassed being, a master teacher and guide, the teacher of celestial beings and humans, a buddha, a world honored one.

The Buddha Pure Flower Astral King Wisdom was surrounded by a great assembly of countless numbers of bodhisattvas offering their respects, as he taught them the True Teaching, at the moment when the light from Shakyamuni Buddha shined throughout his world.

At that time, in the land Adorned with Pure Light, there was a bodhisattva called Wondrous Sound, who had long since planted many virtuous roots, who had served countless millions of buddhas and been close to them, and who had achieved the most profound wisdom.

This bodhisattva had attained the concentration state called Sign of the Wondrous Banner, the concentration state called Flower of Truth, the concentration state called Pure Virtue, the concentration

state called Astral King at Play, the concentration state called No Entanglements, the concentration state called Seal of Wisdom, the concentration state called Understanding the Speech of All Living Beings, the concentration state called Gathering Together All Merits, the concentration state called Pure and Clean, the concentration state called Wandering at Play in Spiritual Powers, the concentration state called Lamp of Wisdom, the concentration state called Beautifully Adorned King, the concentration state called Pure Light, the concentration state called Pure Treasure, the concentration state called Unparalleled, and the concentration state called Sun Revolving. He had attained countless hundreds of millions of major concentration states like these.

When Shakyamuni Buddha's light shined on his body, he said to the Buddha Pure Flower Astral King Wisdom:

"O World Honored One, I will go visit the world Endurance, where I will pay respects to Shakyamuni Buddha, approach him, and make offerings to him.

"I will also meet the Prince of the Dharma, the bodhisattva Manjushri, and the bodhisattva Medicine King, and the bodhisattva Courageous Generosity, and the bodhisattva Astral King Flower, and the bodhisattva Higher Practice, and the bodhisattva Beautifully Adorned King, and the bodhisattva Beyond Medicine."

Then the Buddha Pure Flower Astral King Wisdom said to the bodhisattva Wondrous Sound:

"Do not look down on that world Endurance or think of it as low and mean. That world Endurance has high places and low places and the land is full of stony mountains, and it is filled with evil and

pollution. The buddha there is small in stature, and so are the bodhisattvas, whereas your body is four hundred eighty thousand miles high, and my body is six million eight hundred thousand miles high. Your body is straight and tall, with hundreds of thousands of marks of distinction, and shines with a wondrous light.

“This is why [I say to you] when you go there, do not look down on that world or think of it as low and mean.”

The bodhisattva Wondrous Sound said to the Buddha Pure Flower Astral King Wisdom: “Now I go to visit the world Endurance, by the power of the ones who arrive at reality, wandering freely in the spiritual powers of the ones who arrive at reality, adorned with the merits and wisdom of the ones who arrive at reality.”

Then, without rising from his seat, and without moving his body, the bodhisattva Wondrous Sound entered a concentration state, and by the power of that concentration state traveled to the Vulture Peak and arrived not far from Shakyamuni Buddha’s teaching seat, conjuring up a multitude of jewel lotuses, with stems of gold and leaves of silver and fringes of diamond and sepals of crimson jewels.

At that point the Prince of the Teaching Manjushri, seeing these lotuses, asked the Buddha: “What is the reason for the appearance of this auspicious sign – all these millions of lotuses with stems of gold and leaves of silver and fringes of diamond and sepals of crimson jewels?”

Then Shakyamuni Buddha said to Manjushri: “The great bodhisattva Wondrous Sound wants to come here to the world Endurance, from the land of the Buddha Pure Flower Astral King Wisdom, accompanied by eighty-four thousand bodhisattvas, to

make offerings and approach me and pay his respects. He also wants to hear the sutra *Lotus of Truth* and make offerings to it.”

Manjushri said to the Buddha: “What good roots has this bodhisattva planted, and what merits has he cultivated, to have such great spiritual powers? What concentration states does he practice? Please tell us the names of these concentration states – we too wish to cultivate them.

“By practicing these concentration states, we will be able to see how big the physical form of this bodhisattva is and watch his majestic bearing as he enters our world and sojourns here.

“Please, World Honored One, use your spiritual powers to enable us to see this bodhisattva when he comes here.”

Then Shakyamuni Buddha said to Manjushri: “The long extinct Buddha Many Jewels will make the form of this bodhisattva appear to you.”

Then the Buddha Many Jewels said to the bodhisattva Wondrous Sound: “Come here – the Prince of the Teaching Manjushri wants to see your body.”

Then the bodhisattva Wondrous Sound disappeared from his own land and, together with eighty-four thousand bodhisattvas, came to the world Endurance. The worlds they passed through along the way shook, and there were showers of jewel lotuses as they passed by, and celestial music played.

This bodhisattva Wondrous Sound had eyes as wide and large as the leaves of blue lotuses. Even if a million moons were joined together, his handsome face would have outshone them. His body

was a golden color, adorned with countless hundreds of thousands of marks of his merits. His awe-inspiring virtues shone with a brilliant light, and he had all the characteristics of a sage. His body was as solid as Narayana, the eternal human archetype .

This bodhisattva Wondrous Sound went onto a pedestal made of the seven precious gems and rose several hundred feet into the air. With the reverent bodhisattvas all around him, he came to visit this world Endurance and arrived at the Vulture Peak.

After he got there, he came down from the pedestal made of the seven precious gems and took a priceless necklace and carried it to where Shakyamuni Buddha was. He bowed at Shakyamuni Buddha's feet and presented him with the necklace. Then he said to the Buddha:

"World Honored One, the Buddha Pure Flower Astral King Wisdom sends his greetings and asks how you are doing.

"Are you free from sickness and distress? Are you at ease and at peace in your work? Are the four elements attuned and in harmony? Are you bearing with the things of the world patiently?

"Are living beings here easy to save? Are they free from too much greed, desire, anger, ignorance, jealousy, stinginess, and arrogance? Do they avoid being unfilial toward their parents, disrespectful toward the monks and nuns? Are they free from misguided opinions and bad motives and uncontrolled emotions?

"Are these living beings able to overcome the demons of delusion?

“Has the long extinct Buddha Many Jewels come here in his jeweled tower to listen to the teaching? Is the Buddha Many Jewels at peace? Are his troubles few? Can he bear with them?”

“World Honored One, how I would like to see the Buddha Many Jewels in person. Please show him to me and let me see him.”

So then Shakyamuni Buddha told the Buddha Many Jewels: “The bodhisattva Wondrous Sound wants to meet you.”

Then the Buddha Many Jewels said to Wondrous Sound: “Excellent, excellent! How good it is that you have been able to come here to make an offering to Shakyamuni Buddha, and hear the sutra *Lotus of Truth* , and see Manjushri and the others.”

At that point the bodhisattva Flower Virtue addressed the Buddha and said: “World Honored One, what good roots has this bodhisattva Wondrous Sound planted, and what merits has he cultivated, that he possesses these spiritual powers?”

The Buddha told the bodhisattva Flower Virtue:

“In the past there was a Buddha named King of Clouds and Thunder. He was one who had arrived at reality, a worthy one, one who had achieved ultimate complete enlightenment. His land was called Manifesting All Worlds. His era was called Joy to See.

“For twelve thousand years, the bodhisattva Wondrous Sound made offerings of a hundred thousand kinds of music to the Buddha King of Clouds and Thunder. He also offered him eighty-four thousand bowls made of the seven precious gems.

“As the result of these causes, he was born in this lifetime in the land of the Buddha Pure Flower Astral King Wisdom, and he possesses these spiritual powers.

“What do you think? The bodhisattva Wondrous Sound who in that time made offerings of music and of jewel vessels to the Buddha King of Clouds and Thunder – how could he have been anyone else? He is the great bodhisattva Wondrous Sound here today.

“This bodhisattva Wondrous Sound has already made offerings to and gotten close to countless buddhas, and he has been planting virtuous roots since long ago. He has already met countless millions of buddhas.

“Flower Virtue, all that you are seeing is the body of the bodhisattva Wondrous Sound that is here now. But this bodhisattva can manifest all kinds of bodies, and can teach this sutra to living beings everywhere.

“He may display the body of Brahma the creator of the world, or the body of Shakra the King of the Gods, or the body of the god Ishvara, or the body of the god Maheshvara.

“He may display the body of a great celestial general, or the body of the celestial king Vaishravana, god of wealth, or the body of a wheel-turning sage king, or the body of a minor king, or the body of a chieftain, or the body of a citizen, or the body of a high official, or the body of a priest, or the body of a Buddhist monk or nun or layman or laywomen.

“He may display the body of the wife of a chieftain, or the wife of a citizen, or the wife of a high official, or the wife of a priest.

“He may display the body of a boy or a girl.

“He may display the body of a celestial being, or an ocean spirit, or a nature spirit, or a celestial musician, or a jealous spirit, or a giant bird, or a loving spirit, or a spirit of eternal time. He may display the body of a human or a nonhuman. He may display any kind of body in order to teach this sutra.

“He can save everyone – beings in hell, hungry ghosts, animals, all living beings in difficult situations.

“In order to teach this sutra he can even transform himself into a courtesan.

“This bodhisattva Wondrous Sound can rescue and protect all living beings in the world Endurance.

“This bodhisattva Wondrous Sound can appear physically by means of all these transformations, in order to teach this sutra to the living beings in this world Endurance. His wisdom is not damaged by any of these transformations made possible by his spiritual powers.

“This bodhisattva illuminates the world Endurance with various kinds of wisdom and enables living beings there to attain knowledge. He also functions like this in countless worlds throughout the ten directions of the cosmos.

“For those who can attain salvation through a seeker of personal salvation, he appears in the form of a seeker of personal salvation in order to set forth the True Teaching to them.

“For those who can attain salvation through one who has attained illumination by contemplating cause and effect, he appears

in the form of one who has attained illumination by contemplating cause and effect in order to set forth the True Teaching to them.

“For those who can attain salvation through a bodhisattva, he appears in the form of a bodhisattva in order to set forth the True Teaching to them.

“For those who can attain salvation through a buddha, he appears in the form of a buddha in order to set forth the True Teaching to them.

“In this way the bodhisattva Wondrous Sound manifests any physical form that is required to enable people to attain salvation. For those who need to witness someone attaining extinction in final nirvana in order to be saved, he appears to become extinct.

“Such is the work of the great bodhisattva Wondrous Sound in achieving the power of great spiritual penetration and wisdom.”

Then the bodhisattva Flower Virtue said to the Buddha:

“World Honored One, the bodhisattva has deeply planted the roots of goodness. In what concentration state does this bodhisattva dwell, to be able to operate within these transformations like this, in order to bring liberation to living beings?”

The Buddha told the bodhisattva Flower Virtue:

“This concentration state is called Manifesting All Physical Forms. Dwelling in this concentration state, the bodhisattva Wondrous Sound can benefit countless living beings like this.”

While the Buddha was giving this account of the bodhisattva Wondrous Sound, the eighty-four thousand bodhisattvas who had

come with him to the world Endurance all attained the concentration state of Manifesting All Physical Forms. Countless numbers of bodhisattvas from the world Endurance also attained this concentration state and the mental command that comes with it.

At that point, the great bodhisattva Wondrous Sound, having made his offerings to Shakyamuni Buddha and the tower of the Buddha Many Jewels, returned to his own land. All the lands he passed through trembled and shook, jewel lotuses rained down from the skies, and millions of kinds of music were heard.

When he was back in his own country, surrounded by the eighty-four thousand bodhisattvas who accompanied him, the bodhisattva Wondrous Sound went to the Buddha Pure Flower Astral King Wisdom and said to him:

“World Honored One, I went to the world Endurance and brought benefits to the living beings there.

“I saw Shakyamuni Buddha and I saw the tower of the Buddha Many Jewels and paid my respects and made offerings.

“I also saw the bodhisattva Manjushri, the Prince of the Teaching, and the bodhisattva Medicine King, and the bodhisattva Power of Dedication, and the bodhisattva Courageous Giving, and other bodhisattvas. I also enabled eighty-four thousand bodhisattvas to attain the concentration state of Manifesting All Physical Forms.”

While the Buddha was giving this account of the bodhisattva Wondrous Sound, forty-two thousand celestial beings attained the patience that comes with the realization that all things are only relatively real, being products of the interplay of cause and effect,

and thus without intrinsic identity. The bodhisattva Flower Virtue attained the concentration state Flower of the True Teaching.

[1]—The six planes of existence: as celestial beings), human beings, jealous gods (jealous spirits), animals, hungry ghosts, hell-beings.

[2]—The five spiritual powers: the power to see anything anywhere, the power to hear anything anywhere, the power to know the thoughts of other minds, the power to know the past lives of oneself and others, the power to be anywhere and do anything

[3]—In the most literal sense: the truth of suffering, the truth of the formation of suffering, the truth of release from suffering, the truth of the path to the release from suffering.

[4]—The twelve links: ignorance; mental constructs; name-and-form; the six senses; contact; sensation; desire; attachment; coming into being; birth; old age; sickness and death.

[5]—The six paramitas: generosity; discipline; patience; energy focus; meditation; wisdom; the basic practical methods of the Great Journey, Mahayana.

[6]—These are the ten epithets: one who has arrived at Reality (tathagata); worthy of being served; possessed of correct comprehensive knowledge; equipped with enlightened conduct; well gone (from the mundane world); liberated from the mundane world; unsurpassed being; master guide; teachers of celestial beings and humans; enlightened one and world honored one.

[7]—The power to see the inner truth of things; the power to see the patterns of karmic cause and effect running through past, present and future; the power to know all forms of liberation and all states of meditative concentration; the power to know how sharp or dull the faculties of all living beings are; the power to know

what all living beings can understand; the power to know the differences between the experiential realms of all living beings; the power to see all the good and bad deeds of living beings enmeshed in birth and death; the power to know the past lives of living beings; the power to know how to put an end to habit energy and the momentum of falsity and delusion; and the power to know reality as it is.

[8]—The four truths: suffering, the origin of suffering, the end of suffering, and the path to the end of suffering.

[9]—The five aggregates: form, sensation, conceptualization, volitional synthesis, and consciousness.

[10]—The realm of desire, the realm of pure form, and the realm of formless meditation states.

[11]—The three forms of insight are: knowledge of past lives, knowledge of the future, undistorted knowledge of the present.

[12]—The six penetrating powers are: the power to appear anywhere, the power to see anything anywhere, the power to hear any sound anywhere, the power to read the minds of others, the power to know past lives, the power of undefiled knowledge.

[13]—The three forms of suffering are: the suffering inherent in the impermanence of life; the suffering arising from desires that cannot be satisfied; and the suffering from the instability of all compounded and constructed things, such as our bodies, our feelings, our perceptions, our consciousness.

[14]—The six ways of transcendence: generosity, discipline, patience, dedication, meditation, wisdom.

The four forms of fearlessness: the fearlessness that comes with all-knowledge, the fearlessness that comes with being undefiled, fearlessness in teaching what blocks the path, fearlessness in teaching the path that ends suffering.

The four ways of attracting people: generosity, kind words, beneficial action, sharing in their work.

The eighteen uncommon spiritual powers of those who arrive at reality:

- 1) tireless detachment from the faults of the body
- 2) unfailingly kind speech and detachment from the faults of speech
- 3) freedom from the faults of will and intent
- 4) equanimity toward all living beings
- 5) imperturbably helping all deluded living beings get rid of their confusion
- 6) insight into and detachment from all the doings of living beings
- 7) unwavering faith toward nirvana without abode
- 8) freedom from attachment toward nirvana without abode
- 9) tireless dedication to benefiting beings
- 10) mastery of all methods of fostering the development of all living beings
- 11) complete liberation, without clinging to the qualities of the seeker's version of nirvana
- 12) the knowledge that comes with liberation, to benefit living beings and dispel sophistry and enable all living beings equally to achieve supreme nirvana
- 13) acting in accordance with wisdom, always being in accord with wisdom, and thus being guided by wisdom
- 14) speaking in accordance with wisdom, free from all lies and false distinctions, and thus being guided by wisdom
- 15) thinking in accordance with wisdom, regarding all living beings as inherently equal, and benefiting them all impartially, thus being guided by wisdom
- 16) knowing the past without attachments and without obstructions, internally detached, externally free from all bondage, knowing everything in the past as inherently equal, breaking away from false theories
- 17) knowing the future without attachments and without obstructions, knowing everything that is to come as inherently equal, breaking away from false

theories

18) knowing the present without attachments and without obstructions, knowing everything in the present as inherently equal, and breaking away from false theories.

[15]—“The truth of emptiness in the Great Journey” – that emptiness is not apart from form, and the bodhisattva practice of exercising compassion and working for universal salvation is integral to the realization of emptiness. “Emptiness” in the Buddhist context means that all phenomena are empty of intrinsic identity.

[16]—The five aggregates that compose ordinary experience are: form, sensation, conception, volitional synthesis, and consciousness.

[17]—The eight liberations are included among the achievements of the worthy ones, the arhats: 1) liberation by observing outer forms with an internal idea of forms existing; 2) liberation by observing outer forms with an internal idea of no forms existing; 3) liberation by complete realization of the purified body; 4) liberation in infinite emptiness; 5) liberation in infinite consciousness; 6) liberation in total nothingness; 7) liberation in neither thought nor no thought; 8) liberation in the stability where sensation and conception are extinct.

[18]—The six powers are: the power to hear at a distance (“the heavenly ear”), the power to see at a distance (“the heavenly eye”), the power to see into the minds of others, the power to see past lives, the power to move freely in space, and the power to end all defilements.

[19]—The three forms of insight are: insight into past lives, insight into present and future events, insight to end defilement.

[20]—See note 17.

[21]—The classic Buddhist analysis distinguishes six sense faculties and associated categories of sense-objects: eyes (form), ears (sound), nose (scent), tongue (taste), body (touch), and conceptual mind (thought).