

Seven Parables from the Lotus Sutra

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Translated from the Chinese of Kumārajīva
by Tsugunari Kubo and Akira Yuyama
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Led by Hozan Alan Senauke

CHAPTER 3 (A)

The Parable

At that time, the Four-fold Assembly of Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas, as well as the great multitude of *gandharvas*, *asuras*, *garudas*, *kinnaras*, *mahoragas*, and so forth, seeing Shariputra, in the presence of the Buddha, receive a prediction for *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*, greatly rejoiced in their hearts and leapt for unbounded joy.

Each removed his upper garment and presented it as an offering to the Buddha. Shakro Devanam Indrah and the Brahma Heaven King, together with countless gods, also made offerings to the Buddha of heavenly wonderful garments, heavenly *mandarava* flowers and *mahamandarava* flowers, and so forth.

The heavenly garments they tossed aloft remained in empty space and whirled around. Then, all at once, in empty space hundreds of thousands of myriads of kinds of heavenly music began to play, and there fell a rain of heavenly flowers.

As they uttered these words, “Long ago in Varanashi, the Buddha first turned the Wheel of Dharma. Now, he turns again that unsurpassed, magnificent Dharma - wheel.”

At that time, all the gods, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke the following verse:

Long ago in Varanashi,
You turned the Dharma-wheel of Four Truths,
Discriminatingly speaking of the Dharmas,
The production and extinction of Five Heaps.

Now, again, you turn that wondrous,
Unsurpassed, great Wheel of Dharma.
This Dharma is deep and recondite,
And few are those who can believe it .

We from of old,
Have often heard the World Honored One speak,
But never have we heard such Dharma,
So deep, wondrous, and supreme.

The World Honored One has spoken the Dharma,
And we rejoice accordingly,
As the greatly wise Shariputra
Now receives the Honored One's prediction.

We, too, are like this,
And will surely become Buddhas,
Throughout all the worlds,
Most honored and supreme.

The Buddha's Way is inconceivable,
Taught expediently according to what is fitting.
May all of our blessed karma,
In this life and in lives gone by,
And the merit and virtue gained from seeing the Buddha,
Be dedicated to the Buddha Way.

At that time, Shariputra spoke to the Buddha, saying, “World Honored One, I now have no further regret, having received from the Buddha a prediction for Anuttarasamyaksambodhi. But the twelve hundred whose hearts have attained self-mastery, and who formerly dwelt in the Stage of Study, were constantly taught by the Buddha who said, ‘My Dharma can enable one to separate from birth, old age, sickness, and death and attain to Ultimate Nirvana.’

Both Those Who Study and Those Beyond Study alike have separated from the View of Self, the Views of Existence and Non-existence, and so forth, and claim that they have attained Nirvana. Yet now, hearing from the World Honored One that which they have never heard before, they have all fallen into doubt and delusion. Good indeed, World Honored One, I hope that you would, for the sake of the Four-fold Assembly, speak of these causes and conditions, to free them of their doubts and regrets.”

At that time, the Buddha told Shariputra, “Have I not said before that all Buddhas, World Honored Ones, speak the Dharma by means of various causes and conditions, parables, phrases, and expedient devices, all for the sake of Anuttarasamyaksambodhi? All of these teachings are for the sake of transforming Bodhisattvas. However, Shariputra, I shall now again make use of a parable in order to further clarify the principle, for all those who are wise gain understanding through parables.”

“Shariputra, suppose that in a country, a city, or a village, there is a great Elder, aged and worn, of limitless wealth, possessing many fields, houses, and servants.”

“His house is spacious and large, having only one door but with a great many people--one hundred, two hundred, even five hundred of them--dwelling within it.”

“Its halls and chambers are decaying and old; its walls are crumbling. The pillars are rotting at their bases; the beams and ridgepoles are toppling dangerously.”

“All at once, throughout the house, a fire breaks out, setting the house ablaze.”

“The Elder’s sons, ten, twenty, even thirty of them are inside the house.”

“The Elder, seeing the fire arise from the four sides, is greatly alarmed and makes the following reflection: ‘Although I have been able to escape safely through this burning doorway, all my children remain inside the burning house, happily attached to their amusement, unaware, unknowing, not alarmed and not afraid. The fire presses upon them and the pain will sear them, but at heart they do not mind it, nor have they any thought to escape.’”

“Shariputra, the Elder then reflects, ‘My body and arms are strong. I might gather them into a cloth pouch or onto a table and take them from the house.’ He further reflects, ‘This house has only one door and it is narrow and small. My sons are young and immature and as yet know nothing. Attached to their place of play, they may fall and be burnt in the fire.’”

“ ‘I must tell them of this frightful matter, that the house has caught fire, and they must hurry and come out so as not to be burned.’ So thinking, he speaks to his sons, saying, ‘Come out, all of you quickly!’ Although the father, in his pity, induces them with good words, still all the sons are happily attached to their amusements and play and refuse to believe him. They are not frightened or afraid and have no intention of leaving. What is more, they do not know what is meant by fire, what is meant by house or what is meant by being lost. They merely run from east to west in play, staring at their father.”

“Then, the Elder has this thought, ‘The house is already ablaze with a great fire. If my sons and I do not get out in time, we certainly shall be burned. I shall now devise an expedient device so that my sons can avoid this disaster.’”

“The father, knowing both the predispositions of his sons and the preferences each has for various precious toys and unusual playthings to which they happily responded, speaks to them, saying, ‘The things you will love to play with are rare and hard to get. If you do not take them, you will certainly regret it later. Things such as these: a variety of sheep carts, deer carts, and ox carts, are now outside the door for you to play with. All of you should quickly come out of this burning house and I shall give you whatever you want.’”

“Then the children, hearing their father speak of these precious playthings which suited their wishes exactly, eagerly push and shove one another aside in a mad scramble, all fighting to get out of the burning house.”

“At that time, the Elder, seeing that all his sons had gotten out safely and were seated on the ground at the crossroads, is without further obstruction; his mind is at peace and he is filled with joy.”

“Then the children all speak to their father, saying, ‘Father, the fine playthings you promised us a while ago, the sheep carts, the deer carts, and the ox carts, please give them to us now.’”

“O Shariputra, at that time, the Elder gives to all of his sons equally great carts.”

“The cart is high and wide, adorned with a multitude of intertwining jewels, surrounded by railings, and hung with bells on its four sides. Further, it is covered with canopies, adorned with various rare and precious jewels, strung with jeweled cords and hung with flowered tassels. The cart is heaped with beautiful mats and set about with rosy cushions. It is yoked to an ox, plump and white and of fine appearance, of great muscular strength, that walks with even tread, as fleet as the wind, having also many servants who follow and guard it.”

“And why is this? That great Elder has limitless wealth and all manner of storehouses full to overflowing.”

“So he reflects thus: ‘My possessions are boundless. I should not give my children small or inferior carts. All of these youngsters are my children whom I love without partiality. Having such great carts made of the seven jewels, infinite in number, I should give them to each one equally. Why? If I gave them to an entire country, they would not run short; how much the less if I gave them to my children!’”

“Meanwhile, all of the children are riding around on the great carts, having gotten what they never expected to have, beyond their original hopes.”

“Shariputra, what do you think? When that Elder gives equally to all of his children the great jeweled carriages, is he guilty of falsehood or not?”

Shariputra replied, “No, World Honored One. The Elder is not guilty of falsehood, for he has only enabled his children to avoid the calamity of fire, and has thereby saved their lives. Why is this? In saving their lives, he has already given them a fine plaything. How much the more so his setting up of expedients to save them from the burning house.”

“World Honored One, if that Elder had not given them even so much as a single small cart, he still would not have been speaking falsely. Why? Because the Elder previously had this thought, ‘I will use expedients to lead my children out.’ For this reason, he is not guilty of falsehood. He is even less guilty since, knowing his own wealth to be limitless and wishing to benefit all his children, he gives to them equally great carts.”

The Buddha told Shariputra, “Good indeed, good indeed! It is just as you say.”

“Shariputra, the Thus Come One is also like this in that he is a father to all in the world. He has forever ended all fear, weakness, worry, ignorance and obscurity. He has completely realized the limitless Knowledge and Vision, Powers, and Fearlessnesses. He has great spiritual might and the power of wisdom. He has perfected the paramitas of expedients and wisdom.

He is greatly kind and compassionate. Never tiring, he ever seeks the good, benefiting all. Thus he is born in the Three Realms which are like a burning house in order to save living beings from the fires of birth, old age, sickness, death, grief, misery, stupidity, dullness, and the three poisons. He teaches and transforms them, leading them to the attainment of Anuttarasamyaksambodhi.”

“He sees all living beings are scorched by birth, old age, sickness, death, grief, and misery. They undergo various sufferings, because of the Five Desires, wealth and profit. Further, because of their clinging and grasping, they presently undergo a mass of sufferings and in the future will undergo sufferings in the hells, among the animals, or hungry ghosts. If born in the heavens or among human beings, they will suffer poverty and distress, the suffering of being separated from what one loves, the

suffering of being joined together with what one hates, and all the various sufferings such as these.

However, living beings sunk in morass, joyfully sport, unaware, unknowing, unalarmed and unafraid. They do not grow satiated nor do they seek liberation. In the burning house of the Three Realms, they run about from east to west. Although they encounter tremendous sufferings, they are not concerned.”

“Shariputra, having seen this, the Buddha further thinks, ‘I am the father of living beings. I should rescue them from these sufferings and difficulties, and give them the limitless and boundless joy of the Buddha-wisdom to play with.’”

“Shariputra, the Thus Come One further thinks, ‘If I merely use spiritual power and the power of wisdom, and cast aside expedients, praising for all living beings the power of the Thus Come One’s Knowledge and Vision, Powers, and Fearlessnesses, living beings will not be able to be saved in this way. Why is this? All of these living beings have not yet escaped birth, old age, sickness, death, grief and misery. They are being scorched in the burning house of the Three Realms. How could they understand the wisdom of the Buddha?’”

“ Shariputra, just as that Elder, although he had a powerful body and arms, did not use them, but merely applied expedients with diligence to save all the children from disaster in the burning house, and afterwards gave to each of them a great cart adorned with precious jewels, in the same way, the Thus Come One, although he has powers and fearlessnesses, does not use them.”

“He merely uses wisdom and expedients to rescue living beings from the burning house of the Three Realms, speaking to them of Three Vehicles: those of Hearer, Pratyeka Buddha, and Buddha.”

“And he says to them, ‘All of you should take no pleasure in dwelling in the burning house of the Three Realms. Do not lust after vulgar and evil forms, sounds, smells, tastes and tangible objects. If you attach to them greedily and give rise to love for them, you will be burnt. You should quickly escape the Three Realms and attain the Three Vehicles: the Hearer, Pratyeka Buddha, and Buddha Vehicles.’”

“I now give my Pledge for this and it shall never be proved false. You need only diligently and vigorously cultivate. The Thus Come One using these expedient means leads all living beings.”

“He further says, ‘You should all know that the Dharmas of the Three Vehicles have been praised by the sages. They will make you free, unbound, and self-reliant. Riding on these Three Vehicles, by means of non-outflow roots, powers, enlightenments, ways, dhyanas, concentrations, liberations, samadhis, and so on, you shall amuse yourselves and attain limitless peace and joy.’”

“Shariputra, if there are living beings who inwardly possess the wisdom-nature, and hearing the Dharma from the Buddha, the World Honored One, believed and accepted it, diligently making progress, wishing quickly to escape the Three Realms and seeking Nirvana for themselves, they are called those of the Hearer Vehicle. They are like the children who sought the sheep carts and thereby escaped from the burning house.”

“If there are living beings who hearing the Dharma from the Buddha, the World Honored One, believed and accepted it, diligently making progress, and who seek for themselves Spontaneous Wisdom, delighting in solitude and fond of stillness, deeply understanding the causal conditions of all dharmas; they are called those of the Pratyeka Buddha Vehicle. They are like the children who sought the deer carts and so escaped from the burning house.”

“If there are living beings who hearing the Dharma from the Buddha, the World Honored One, believed and accepted it, earnestly cultivating with vigor, seeking All-wisdom, Buddha-wisdom, Spontaneous Wisdom, Untutored Wisdom, the Knowledge and Vision of the Thus Come One, his Powers and Fearlessnesses, pitying and comforting limitless living beings, benefiting gods and humans, saving all, they are called those of the Great Vehicle. Because the Bodhisattvas seek this vehicle, they are called Mahasattvas. They are like the children who sought the ox carts and so escaped from the burning house.”

“Shariputra, just as that Elder, seeing all his children safely escape the burning house to a place of fearlessness, and considering his own unlimited wealth, give to all of his children great carts.”

“The Thus Come One, in the same way, is the father of all living beings. When he sees limitless kotis of living beings using the gateway of the Buddha’s teaching to get off the fearsome and dangerous path of the sufferings of the Three Realms and attain the bliss of Nirvana, he has this thought, ‘I have limitless and boundless wisdom, powers, fearlessnesses and so on--the complete storehouse of the Buddhadharmas.’”

All of these living beings are my children. I should give to all of them great carts, not allowing them to gain individual Quiescence, but crossing them over to Quiescence by means of the Thus Come One's Quiescence. Having escaped the Three Realms, all these living beings are given as playthings the Buddha's Dhyana Samadhis, Liberations, and so forth, all of one mark and one kind, praised by the sages and productive of pure, wondrous, and foremost bliss.'"

"Shariputra, just as that Elder first having used the three carts to entice his children and then later having given them great carts adorned with jewels and supremely comfortable, is not guilty of falsehood, just so is the Thus Come One likewise not guilty of falsehood in first speaking of the Three Vehicles to entice living beings and then afterwards delivering them only by means of the Great Vehicle. What is the reason?"

The Thus Come One has limitless wisdom, powers and fearlessnesses, a storehouse of Dharmas, and is able to give to all living beings the Great Vehicle Dharma. Not all living beings, however, are able to accept it. Shariputra, because of these causes and conditions, you should know that the Buddhas, using the power of expedient devices, in the One Buddha Vehicle, discriminate and speak of three."

CHAPTER 3 (B)

A PARABLE

Thereupon Śāriputra stood up ecstatic and joyful, pressed his palms together and, gazing at the Buddha, the Bhagavat, said: "Now, hearing the words of this Dharma from the Bhagavat, my heart is full of joy for I have experi- 10c enced something unprecedented. What is the reason for this? In the past when I heard this Dharma from the Buddha and saw the bodhisattvas receive their predictions, I was not included. I grieved because I thought I had been deprived of the immeasurable wisdom and insight of the Tathāgata.

"O Bhagavat! While I was dwelling alone under forest trees, whether sitting or walking, I was constantly thinking this: 'Since we have also real- ized the true nature of the Dharma, why has the Tathāgata tried to save us with the teachings of the inferior vehicle?'

“The fault is ours, not the Bhagavat’s. Why is this? If we had waited for your explanation about the way to achieve highest, complete enlightenment, we certainly would have been able to save ourselves by means of the Mahayana. However, we did not understand that you were teaching with skillful means, according to what is appropriate to us. When we first heard the Buddha’s teaching, we immediately accepted, contemplated, and understood it.

“O Bhagavat! Since long ago I have reproached myself incessantly day and night. But now from the Buddha we have heard the unprecedented Dharma that we have never heard before, and it has removed all our doubts.

“I have obtained peace and tranquility in body and mind. Today I have finally realized that I am truly the heir of the Buddha, born from the mouth of the Buddha, incarnated from the Dharma, and that I have inherited a part of the Buddha-Dharma.” ...

Then the Buddha said to Śāriputra: “Did I not previously tell you that all the Buddha Bhagavats explain the Dharma with various explanations and illustrations using skillful means, all for the sake of highest, complete enlightenment!? All of these teachings are for leading and inspiring the bodhisattvas.

“Moreover, Śāriputra, I will now clarify what I mean with illustrations. Those with wisdom will be able to understand through these illustrations. “O Śāriputra! Suppose there were an aged and extremely affluent man, either in a town, city, or country, who has immeasurable wealth, abundant estates, mansions, and servants. He has a spacious house, yet it only has a single entrance. Suppose many people live there, as many as one, two, or even five hundred people. The buildings are in poor repair, the fences and walls are crumbling, the pillar bases are rotten, and the beams and frame-work are dangerously tilted.

“Suddenly and unexpectedly, fires break out everywhere, setting the house swiftly aflame. The children of this man, ten, twenty, or thirty in number are in the house.

“The affluent man, seeing the fire breaking out everywhere, becomes alarmed and terrified. He thinks:

I am capable of escaping through the burning entrance in safety, but my children are absorbed in play within the burning house and are not aware [of the fire], do not know, are not alarmed or terrified, and the fire is approaching them! They are not troubled about their suffering nor do they intend to leave the house.

“O Śāriputra, this affluent man thought:

Since I am still physically strong I could take the children out of the house in the folds of my garment or on top of a desk.

“He further thought:

There is only one entrance to this house and it is very narrow. The children, who are immature and still unaware, are attached to their place of play. They may fall into danger and be burned by the fire. I should now tell them of the danger; this house is already burning! They must escape as quickly as they can to avoid being burned by the fire!

“After considering this he urged the children according to his thought: Children! Run out immediately!

“Although their father in his concern has given them the proper advice, 12c the children are immersed in their play and do not accept it; they are neither alarmed nor afraid and have no intention of leaving [the burning house]. Moreover, they do not even know what a fire is, the condition of the house,

or what they may lose. They merely run about, back and forth, looking at their father.

“Thereupon the affluent man thought:

This house is already engulfed in flames. If my children and I do not get out, we shall perish in the fire. I will now use skillful means to help my children escape from this disaster.

“Since the father already knew that his children were attached to various rare toys and unusual things that each of them liked, he said to them:

The toys you are fond of are rare and hard to obtain. If you do not take them you will certainly regret it later. Right now, outside the house, there are three kinds of carts. One is yoked to a sheep, one to a deer, and one to an ox. Go play with them. Children! Run out of this burning house immediately and I will give you whatever you want!

“The children, hearing what their father had said about the rare toys, became excited and, in their eagerness to get to them they pushed each other out of the way in a mad rush out of the burning house.

“Then the affluent man saw that his children had got out safely and were sitting unharmed in an open area at a crossroad. He was relieved, happy, and joyful. The children said to their father:

Father, please give us the toys you promised: those [three] carts, one yoked to a sheep, one to a deer, and one to an ox!

“O Śāriputra, the affluent man then gave each child the same kind of large cart. These carts were tall and spacious, adorned with various jewels, and encircled with railings full of hanging bells. On the tops of the carts were canopies also decorated with various kinds of jewels. These carts were draped with jeweled cords and hung with flower garlands. They were thickly piled with fabrics, and red pillows had been placed about. These carts were each yoked to an ox with a spotlessly white hide. These oxen had beautiful bodies with powerful muscles, even gaits, and were as swift as the wind; and there were many attendants guarding them. Why did the affluent man give these carts? Because the man had great and immeasurable wealth and his abundant storehouses were full. He thus thought further:

Since my treasure has no limit, I should not give my children inferior carts. These are my children and I love them all equally. I have an immeasurable number of large carts such as these, decorated with the seven treasures. I should equally distribute them to each child without discrimination. Why is this? Even if I gave carts like these to everyone in the country, their number would not be exhausted. Why should I not give them to my own children?

“At that time, the children each climbed into a great cart and had an unprecedented experience, one beyond their original expectations.

“O Śāriputra! What do you think about this? This affluent man gave to his children equally a large cart decorated with precious treasures. Has he deceived them or not?”

Śāriputra replied: “No Bhagavat! The affluent man only tried to help his children escape from the disastrous fire. He saved their lives and did not deceive them. This is by no means a deception. Why? Because by saving their lives they obtained marvelous toys. Moreover, they were saved from the burning house by skillful means.

“O Bhagavat! If this affluent man had not given them even the smallest cart, it still would not have been a deception. Why is this? Because this affluent man thought before: I will help my children escape with skillful means.

“This is why it was not a deception. How much more so, since the affluent man, knowing that he had immeasurable wealth and wanting to benefit them equally, gave each of his children a large [ox]cart.”

The Buddha said to Śāriputra: “Splendid, splendid! It is exactly as you have said. O Śāriputra, the Tathāgata is also just like this. That is to say, as the father of the entire world, he permanently dispels fear, distress, anxiety, ignorance, and blindness. He has attained immeasurable wisdom, insight, power, and fearlessness, as well as great transcendent powers and the power of wisdom. He has attained the perfection of

skillful means and of wisdom. With his great mercy and compassion he incessantly and indefatigably seeks the welfare of all beings and benefits them all.

“The Tathāgata appears in the triple world, which is like a decaying old house on fire, to rescue sentient beings from the fire of birth, old age, illness, and death, anxiety, sorrow, suffering, distress, delusion, blindness, and the three poisons of greed, hatred, and ignorance. Thus he leads and inspires sentient beings and causes them to attain highest, complete enlightenment.

“The Tathāgatas see all sentient beings burning in the fire of birth, old age, illness, and death, anxiety, sorrow, suffering, and distress. Because of the desires of the five senses and the desire for monetary profit they also experience various kinds of suffering. Because of their attachment and pursuits they experience various kinds of suffering in the present; and in the future they will suffer in the states of existence of hell, animals, and hungry ghosts (pretas). If they are born in the heavens or in the human world they will experience a variety of sorrows such as suffering from poverty and destitution, separation from loved ones, or suffering from encounters with those they dislike.

“Although sentient beings are immersed in such sorrows, they rejoice and play. They are not aware, shocked, startled, or disgusted nor do they seek release. Running around in the burning house of the triple world, they experience great suffering and yet they do not realize it.

“O Śāriputra! Seeing these things the Buddha thought:

Since I am the father of sentient beings I must rid them of their immeasurable suffering and distress. I will cause them to rejoice through the immeasurable and limitless pleasure of the buddha wisdom.

“O Śāriputra! The Tathāgata further thought:

If I proclaim the Tathāgata’s wisdom, insight, power, and fearlessness to sentient beings with my transcendent powers and the power of my wisdom alone, without using skillful means, it will be impossible to save them. Why is this? Because these sentient beings have not escaped from birth, old age, illness, and death; anxiety, sorrow, suffering, and distress; and are being burned in the blazing house of the triple world. How would they be able to understand the Buddha’s wisdom?

“O Śāriputra! Although that affluent man had physical strength he did not use it. He only earnestly employed skillful means to save his children from the disaster of the burning house, and later he gave each of them a large cart decorated with precious treasures. The Tathāgata is exactly like this.

“Although the Tathāgata has power and fearlessness he does not use them, but rescues sentient beings from the burning house of the triple world only through wisdom and skillful means, teaching the three vehicles to the śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and the buddhas, saying:

Do not take pleasure in living in this burning house of the triple world. And do not thirst after inferior objects, sounds, smells, flavors, and tangibles. If you are attached to these objects and have desires, then you will be burned. Leave the triple world in haste and you will obtain the three vehicles—the vehicles for the śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and buddhas. I definitely guarantee this to you. In the end it will come true. You should be diligent and persistent!

“The Tathāgata attracts sentient beings through this skillful means, saying further:

You should know that the Noble Ones praise the teachings of these three vehicles that are self-directed, unrestricted, and independent. When they ride in them, sentient beings will enjoy faculties free from corruption and also powers, paths to enlightenment, meditation, liberation, and concentration. And they themselves will attain immeasurable ease and pleasure.

“O Śāriputra! Those beings, wise by nature, who accept the Dharma from the Buddha Bhagavat, who are diligent, persistent, and wish to escape from the triple world quickly, and who are seeking nirvana, are all practicing the śrāvaka vehicle. They are like those children who left the burning house seeking the cart yoked to a sheep.

“Those beings who accept the Dharma of the Buddha Bhagavat, who are diligent and persevere in seeking the wisdom of the Self-generated One and enjoy tranquility for themselves, who profoundly know the causes of and reasons for existence, are all practicing the pratyekabuddha vehicle. They are just like those children who left the burning house seeking the cart yoked to a deer.

“Those beings who accept the Dharma of the Buddha Bhagavat, who are diligent and persevere in seeking the wisdom of the Omniscient One, the wisdom of the Buddha, the wisdom of the Self-generated One, the wisdom acquired without a teacher, the wisdom and insight, powers, and fearlessness of the Tathāgata; who are compassionate, put immeasurable sentient beings at ease, benefit devas and humans, and save all beings, are all practicing the Mahayana. Bodhisattvas are called mahāsattvas (great beings) because they seek this vehicle. They are just like those children who left the burning house seeking the cart yoked to an ox.

“O Śāriputra! That affluent man saw his children leave the burning house 13c safely and arrive at a safe place. Knowing that he had immeasurable wealth,

he gave a large cart equally to each child. The Tathāgata is exactly like this. As the father of all sentient beings he sees that immeasurable thousands of koṭis of sentient beings escape from the dangers, sufferings, and fears of the triple world through the gates of the Buddha's teaching and attain the pleasure of nirvana.

“Then the Tathāgata thought:

Because I possess the treasure house of the Dharma of all the buddhas, which contains immeasurable limitless wisdom, power, and fearlessness, and because all sentient beings are my children, I will give them equally the Mahayana. I will not allow anyone to attain nirvana merely for him- self but will cause everyone to attain it through the Tathāgata's nirvana.

I will give sentient beings who have escaped from the triple world all the toys of the Buddha's meditations and liberations, which are of one character and one kind, are praised by the Noble Ones, and which produce pure and supreme pleasure.

“O Śāriputra! At first that affluent man attracted his children with three kinds of carts, then later gave them only the safest and best large [ox]cart, adorned with jewels. Moreover, that affluent man was never accused of telling a lie. The Tathāgata is exactly like this. He tells no lies.

“In the beginning the Tathāgata teaches the three vehicles in order to lead sentient beings. And later he saves them through only the Mahayana. Why is this? Because the Tathāgata possesses the treasure house of the Dharma, which contains immeasurable wisdom, power, and fearlessness. And although he is able to give the teaching of the Mahayana to all sentient beings, not all of them can accept it.

“O Śāriputra! You should know that the buddhas, with the power of skillful means, teach the single buddha vehicle, dividing and teaching it as three.”

CHAPTER 4 (A) BELIEF AND UNDERSTANDING

At that time the wise and long-lived Subhuti, Mahakatyayana, Mahakashyapa, Mahamaudgalyayana, having heard from the Buddha, Dharma such as they had never heard before, the bestowal of the prediction of *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* upon Shariputra, felt it very rare.

They rose from their seats, jumped for joy, straightened their robes, bared their right shoulders, placed their right knees on the ground, single-mindedly put their palms together, inclined themselves respectfully, gazed at the honored countenance and spoke to the Buddha, saying, “We, who dwell at the head of the Sangha and are advanced in years, told ourselves that we had already attained Nirvana and had no further responsibility, and we did not go forward to seek *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*.”

“The World Honored One has, from of old, been speaking the Dharma for a long time. Sitting here all this time, our bodies tired, we have merely been mindful of emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness, taking no delight in the Bodhisattva Dharmas, in their spiritual penetrations of playfulness, in their purification of Buddhalands, or in their maturation of living beings.”

“What is the reason? The World Honored One has led us to escape the Three Realms and attain certification to Nirvana. Besides, we are now advanced in years and when the Buddha taught the Bodhisattvas of *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* we did not give rise to even a single thought of longing for it.”

“Now, in the presence of the Buddha, having heard him bestow upon the Hearers the *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* prediction, our hearts rejoice enthusiastically and we obtain what we never have had. We never thought that now we would suddenly be able to hear this rare Dharma. We rejoice profoundly, having gained great and good benefit.”

“It is as if, without our seeking them, limitless precious gems had come into our possession.”

“World Honored One, we would now like to speak a parable to clarify this principle.”

“It is as if there were a person who, in his youth, left his father and ran away, dwelling long in another country, perhaps ten, twenty or even fifty years.”

“As he grew older, he became poor and needy and ran about in the four directions in search of clothing and food. Gradually he wandered until he accidentally approached his native land.”

“His father, from the first, had set out seeking his son but in vain. He settled midway in a city. His household was one of great wealth, with limitless wealth and jewels, gold, silver, lapis lazuli, coral, amber, crystal, pearls, and other jewels. His granaries and treasuries were overflowing, and he had many servants, ministers and assistants, as well as countless elephants, horses, carriages, cattle, and sheep. The profits from his trade extended to the other countries, and there were also many traders and merchants.”

“Then the poor son, having wandered through various villages and passed through countries and cities, at last reached the city where his father had settled.”

“The father had always been mindful of his son. Although they had been separated for over fifty years, he had never spoken of the matter to anyone, but merely pondered over it, his heart filled with regret, as he thought, ‘I am old and decrepit. I have much wealth: gold, silver, and precious gems, granaries and storehouses filled to overflowing. Such a pity that I have no son! One day I’m bound to die, and when I do, my wealth will be scattered and lost, for I have no one to bequeath them to.’ This is why he ever earnestly thought of his son. ‘If I could only get my son back, I’d make him heir to my wealth. I’d be contented and happy and have no further worries.’”

“World Honored One, the poor son then, hiring himself as a laborer here and there, unexpectedly arrived at his father’s house. Standing by the gate, he saw his father seated on a Lion-seat. His feet were resting on a jeweled footstool, and he was reverently surrounded by Brahmans, Kshatriyas, and laypeople. Necklaces of pearls, their value in the millions, adorned his body.

Attendants and servants, holding white whisks, waited on him right and left. Above him was a jeweled canopy hung with flowers and pennants. Fragrant water was sprinkled on the ground, and expensive flowers were scattered about. Precious objects were placed in rows, which were passed out and taken in on leaving and entering. Such were the adornments, and the majesty and authority of his awesome virtue.

When the poor son saw his father, possessed of such great power, he was immediately afraid and regretted having come there. Secretly he thought, 'This is perhaps a king, or one equal to a king. This is no place for me to hire myself out. I'd better go to a poor village where there will be room for me to work and where I can easily obtain clothing and food. If I stay here any longer, I may be forced to work.' And with this thought, he quickly ran off."

"Then the wealthy elder, seated on the Lion-seat, seeing his son, recognized him and his heart rejoiced greatly, as he thought, 'I now have someone to whom I can bequeath my wealth and treasures. I have constantly been mindful of my son, but had no way of seeing him. Then, all of a sudden, he came on his own, and my wish has been fulfilled. Although I am old and decrepit I still longed for him with regret.'"

"He then sent attendants to follow him and bring him back. Thereupon, the servants quickly apprehended him. The poor son in alarm shouted in resentment, "I have committed no offense. Why have I been seized?" The servants, with even greater haste, grabbed him and dragged him back. The poor son thought to himself. 'I am blameless and yet have been imprisoned. This surely means that I will die,' and, even more frightened, he fainted and fell to the ground."

"The father saw his son from afar and said to the servant, "I do not need this person. Do not force him to come along. Sprinkle cold water on his face to bring him to, but do not speak further with him" Why was this? The father knew that his son's resolve and will were inferior and lowly, and that his own nobility was a source of difficulty to his son.

Therefore, although he was certain that this was his son, he expediently refrained from telling anyone, "This is my son." The servant said to the son, "I now set you free. You may go wherever you wish." The poor son was delighted, having gained what he had never had before. He rose from the ground and went to a poor village to seek clothing and food."

"Then the elder, wishing to induce his son, set up an expedient and secretly sent two people, haggard and undignified in appearance, saying to them, "You may go there and gently speak to that poor one. Tell him there is a place for him to work here where he can earn twice as much. If he agrees, bring him back and put him to work. If he asks what he is to do, tell him, 'You are being hired to sweep out dung. We two will work along with you.'"

“Then the two servants sought out the poor son, and when they found him, they told him the above matter in detail.”

“At that time the poor son first took his salary and then joined them in sweeping away the dung. When the father saw his son, he felt pity and amazement.”

“Later, on another day, through a window, he saw his son at a distance, thin, haggard, soiled with dung, dirt, and filth.”

“He then removed his necklace of beads, his soft upper garments, and his adornments and put on a coarse, worn out, and filthy robe, smeared himself with dirt and holding a dung shovel, looking frightful he addressed his workers, saying, “All of you, work hard! Do not be lax.” By this device he draws near to his son, to whom he later says, “Hey, my boy! You should stay here and work. Don’t go elsewhere. I will increase your wages. Whatever you need, be it pots, utensils, rice, flour, salt or vinegar or other such things, don’t trouble yourself about it. I also have an old, worn-out servant you can have if you need him. So put your mind at rest. I am like your father, so have no more worries. Why? I am very old, and you are young and strong. Whenever you are working, you are never deceitful, remiss, angry, hateful, or grumbling. I have never seen you commit such evils as I have other workers. From now on you shall be just like my own son.”

“Just then the elder gave him a name, calling him his son. The poor son, although delighted at this happening, still referred to himself as a lowly worker from outside. For this reason, for twenty years he was constantly kept at work sweeping away dung.”

“After this, they trusted one another, and he came and went without difficulty. However, he still stayed in the same place as before.”

“World Honored One: At that time, the elder grew sick and knew he would die before long. He said to the poor son, “I now possess much gold, silver, and jewels, and my granaries and storehouses are filled to overflowing. You should know in detail their quantities and the amounts to be received and given. Such are my thoughts, and you should understand what I mean. What is the reason? You and I are now no different. You should be even more careful that nothing be lost.”

“At that time, the poor son, having received these instructions, took charge of all the goods, the gold, silver, and precious gems, as well as the granaries and storehouses, and yet he did not long for so much as a single meal. He continued to stay in the same

place, still unable to let go of his lowly thoughts.”

“After a short while, the father knew that his son had grown more relaxed, that he had accomplished the great resolve and despised his former state of mind. Knowing that his own end was near, he ordered his son to gather together all the relatives, kings, great ministers, Kshatriyas, and lay people. When they had all assembled, he spoke to them saying, “All of you gentlemen should know that this is my son, begotten by me. In a certain city, he left me and ran away to suffer desolation, poverty, and hardship for over fifty years. His original name was such and such, and my name was such. Long ago, in my native city, I anxiously sought him. Suddenly, here, I have found him again! This is really my son. I am really his father. All of my wealth now belongs to my son, and all that has been paid out and taken in is known by him.”

“World Honored One, when the poor son heard what his father had said, he rejoiced greatly, having obtained what he had never had, and he thought, ‘Originally, I had no thought to seek anything, and now this treasury has come to me of itself.’”

“World Honored One, the great and wealthy elder is the Thus Come One. We are all like the Buddha’s sons.”

“The Thus Come One always says that we are his sons.”

“World Honored One, because of the three kinds of suffering, we have suffered much torment in the midst of births and deaths. Deluded and ignorant, we clung to petty dharmas.”

“Today, the World Honored One has caused us to think about getting rid of the dung of frivolous discussions of the Dharma. We increased our vigor to earn one day’s wage of Nirvana. Having attained this, our hearts rejoiced greatly, and we were content, saying to ourselves that, through our diligence and vigor, what we had gained in the Buddhadharma was plentiful.”

“However, the World Honored One, knowing all along that our minds were attached to lowly desires and took delight in petty dharmas, let us go our own way and did not specify to us saying, ‘You are all to have a share in the treasury of the Thus Come One’s knowledge and vision.’”

“The World Honored One, using the power of expedient devices, has spoken of the Thus Come One’s wisdom. Having gained from the Buddha the one day’s wage of

Nirvana, we took it to be a great attainment; we had no ambition to seek the Great Vehicle. Besides, the wisdom of the Thus Come One had been set forth for the sake of the Bodhisattvas, and so we held no expectations regarding it. What is the reason? The Buddha knew that our minds took delight in petty dharmas. He used the power of expedients to teach us in the appropriate manner, and we did not know that we were truly the Buddha's sons."

"Now we know that the World Honored One is by no means ungenerous with the Buddha's wisdom. Why? From of old, we truly have been the Buddha's sons, and yet we delighted only in petty dharmas. If we had thought to delight in the great, the Buddha would then have spoken for us the Great Vehicle Dharma. This Sutra speaks of only One Vehicle. In the past, in the presence of the Bodhisattvas, the Buddha had belittled the Hearers who delight in lesser dharmas, but he was actually employing the Great Vehicle in teaching and transforming them."

"Therefore, we say that originally we had not hoped for or sought anything, and yet now these great jewels of the Dharma King have come to us of themselves. That which the Buddha's sons should attain, we have already attained."

CHAPTER 4 (B)

WILLING ACCEPTANCE

At that time the noble Subhūti, Mahākātyāyana, Mahākāśyapa, and Mahāmaudgalyāyana, having heard the unprecedented teaching from the Buddha and the Bhagavat's prediction of Śāriputra's highest, complete enlightenment, were filled with wonder and ecstatic joy. They immediately rose from their seats, straightened their garments, leaving their right shoulders bared, and touched their right knees to the ground. With rapt attention and with palms pressed together they bowed in veneration and, gazing at the Bhagavat's face, said to the Buddha: "We are the seniors of the sangha, old and feeble. We considered ourselves to have attained nirvana and to be incapable of further seeking highest, complete enlightenment, so we did not do so.

"It has been a long time since the Bhagavat taught the Dharma in the past. Now we sit with weary bodies and only contemplate emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness. Neither the bodhisattva teaching, nor the carefree sporting with transcendent powers,

nor the pure buddha worlds, nor helping sentient beings attain enlightenment produced any eager desire in us...

“O Bhagavat! We now wish to give an illustration to clarify what we mean: Suppose there were a man who, when he was still a child, left his father and ran away. Living in another region for a long time he passed the age of ten, twenty, even fifty years. The older he got the more impoverished he became. He went searching everywhere for food and clothing, and while he was wandering about he started back by chance in the direction of his native country. From the first the father had looked for his son but in vain; in the meantime he had stayed in the city and become extremely wealthy, and now possessed uncountable treasures.

“[The father’s] storehouses were all filled to overflowing with gold, silver, lapis lazuli, coral, amber, crystal, and other such things. He had many servants, subordinates, and clerks as well as innumerable elephants, horses, carriages, cows, and sheep. He profited through lending and his trade with other countries was also great.

“Then the impoverished son, after wandering through many villages, from one country and city to another, finally reached the city where his father lived. Although the father had constantly thought about the son from whom he had been separated for over fifty years, he nevertheless had spoken to no one about it. He brooded and grieved in his heart, thinking to himself:

I have become old and feeble; and although I have many treasures, and storehouses filled with gold, silver, and precious jewels, I have no son. When I die my treasures will be scattered and lost for lack of someone to whom to entrust them.

“It was for this reason that he was always thinking anxiously about his son. He also thought:

If I could get my son back and leave my fortune to him I would be relieved and happy, and without further worry.

“O Bhagavat! At that time the impoverished son, who had been wandering about, taking odd jobs, by chance finally reached his father’s house. Standing at the side of the gate he saw his father in the distance sitting on the lion seat with his feet propped up on a jeweled stool, respectfully surrounded by many brahmins, ksatriyas, and householders. His body was adorned with pearl necklaces worth thousands of myriads. He was attended on both sides by clerks and servants holding whisker fans. Above was a jeweled canopy with various hanging flowered banners. Perfume was sprinkled on the ground, which was strewn with a variety of beautiful flowers. There were rows of

precious objects, and people were coming and going, buying and selling. With various trappings such as these, the father appeared very majestic indeed.

“The impoverished son, seeing his father wielding such great power, became terrified and regretted that he had ever come to that place. He thought to himself:

He must be a king or of a similar rank. This is not a place where I can obtain things as a hired worker. It would certainly be better for me to go to a poor village, a place where I can use my ability and easily obtain clothing and food. If I stay here for very long I will be seized and put to forced labor.

“Thinking this way, he quickly fled. At that time the wealthy man, sitting on the lion seat, realized that he had seen his son and became extremely happy. He then thought:

Now there is someone to whom I can leave my fortune and treasures. I have been constantly thinking about my son but had no way to meet him, and now suddenly he has come. This is exactly what I wanted. Although I am old I still yearn for him.

“The man immediately dispatched his attendants to chase his son and bring him back. Then the attendants quickly ran and overtook him. The impoverished son was frightened and cried out in fear:

I did nothing wrong! Why are you seizing me?

“The attendants grabbed him more firmly and forced him to return. Then the impoverished son thought:

They have seized me even though I have done nothing wrong. I shall certainly be killed.

“He was so terrified that he collapsed unconscious on the ground. His father, seeing this from a distance, told the attendants:

I don't need him. Don't force him to come! Pour cold water on his face and bring him to consciousness. Don't say anything more to him.

“What was the reason for this? The father knew that his son was of lowly aspiration, and that his own wealth and position would cause him problems. Although the father knew without doubt that the man was his son, he used skillful means and did not say to others, ‘This is my son.’

“The attendant then said to the son: You are free to go wherever you wish.

“Then the impoverished son, happy because he had never felt such relief, stood up and went to a poor village to seek for food and clothing.

“At that time, wanting to get his son back, the wealthy man employed skillful means and secretly dispatched two attendants of wretched and humble appearance. He said to them:

Approach the impoverished fellow and gently tell him that there is a place for him to work where he will be paid double. If he gives his assent then bring him back to work. If he asks you what kind of work there is for him to do, tell him that he will be employed to sweep dung and that both of you will work with him.

“Then the two attendants immediately went in search of the impoverished son. When they found him they told him this. At that time he took his pay and immediately went to work sweeping dung.

“The father, seeing his son, felt pity and wondered what to do. Then one day while looking through the window he saw his son in the distance appearing emaciated and wretched, soiled with dung and dirt. The father took off his necklaces, fine garments, and ornaments and put on torn, filthy clothes. Covering himself with dirt and taking a dung sweeper in his right hand, he made himself look fearsome. He said to his workers: ‘Work hard and don’t be lazy!’

“Through this kind of skillful means he was able to approach his son. He spoke to him further saying:

You! I want you to always work here. Don’t go anywhere else and I will pay you more. There will be no difficulty in getting the things you need, like utensils, rice, noodles, salt, and vinegar. I also have an old servant. If you need him I’ll give him to you. Be at ease! I am just like your father, so don’t worry about anything! Why am I doing this?

Because I am old and you are still young. Whenever you work you are never lazy or sullen and never complain. I never see in you the bad qualities the other workers have. From now on you will be just like my own son.

“Then the wealthy man immediately addressed him as his child. At that time, even though the impoverished son rejoiced at being treated this way, he nevertheless still considered himself a humble employee. For this reason his father let him continue to sweep dung for twenty years. At the end of this period of time each had come to trust the other. Yet even though the son had free access to his father’s house, he still lived in the same place as before.

“O Bhagavat! One day the wealthy man became ill and knew he was going to die before long. He said to the impoverished son:

This is what I have been thinking and I want you to understand my intentions: I now have plenty of gold, silver, and precious treasures filling my storehouses. Get to know exactly how much is being taken in and out of them. Why do I want you to do this? Because you and I are one and the same. Take good care of our fortune and don't let it be lost!

“Then the impoverished son obeyed his instructions. Although he learned everything about the gold, silver, precious treasure, and the storehouses, he never wanted to take even the least amount. Nevertheless he still lived in the same place as before and was still not able to get rid of his feeling of inferiority.

“After a short time had passed the father knew that his son's mind had become composed, that his will had increased, and that he was ashamed of his former feelings. When the father was just on the verge of death he ordered his son to meet the king, ministers, kṣatriyas, householders, and relatives, who had already assembled there. The father then declared:

This is my son, my own progeny. When we were in a certain city he left me and fled. He wandered around for more than fifty years under- going hardships. His original name is Such-and-such, and my name is Such-and-such. Long ago when I was in that city I worried and searched for him. At last and unexpectedly I met up with him. This is my true son and I am, in truth, his father. All of the fortune I now possess belongs to my son. He already knows about our finances.

“O Bhagavat! At that time the impoverished son, hearing what his father said, became extremely happy at having obtained such an unprecedented experience. Then he thought:

I never even considered receiving this; nevertheless, this treasure house has come into my possession, though unsought and unawaited.

“O Bhagavat! This very wealthy man is the Tathāgata, and all of us are the heirs of the Buddha. The Tathāgata has always said that we are his children. Because of the triple sufferings, O Bhagavat, we experienced pain, were confused, ignorant and attached to inferior teachings in life after life. Today the Bhagavat has made us think about getting rid of the dung of fallacies regarding the reality of the world and that, in this respect, we diligently strove to attain the nirvana only as one seeking a salary for a single day's labor. We had already attained it and were extremely happy and satisfied with it. We said to ourselves:

Because we have made diligent efforts to comprehend the Buddha's teaching we have attained a great deal.

“But the Bhagavat had formerly perceived that we were attached to desires and content with lowly aspirations. While letting us be so he did not explain that we were to have a portion of the treasure house of the Tathāgata's wisdom and insight. Through the power of skillful means the Bhagavat has taught the wisdom of the Tathāgatas. Although we had attained nirvana from the Buddha as our salary for one day's labor, we thought we had attained much and did not seek the Mahayana.

“Furthermore, we have manifested and explained the wisdom of the Tathāgata for the bodhisattvas; but we ourselves had no aspirations regarding it.

“Why is this? The Buddha, knowing that we were content with lowly aspirations, taught us according to what is appropriate through the power of skillful means. But we did not know that we really were the heirs of the Buddha.

“Now we fully know that the Bhagavat is unstinting in regard to the wisdom of the buddhas. What is the reason for this? We have actually been the heirs of the Buddha from long ago, even though we only yearned for the inferior teaching. If we had yearned for the superior teaching, then the Buddha would have taught the teachings of the Mahayana to us. Yet, in this sutra he has taught only the single vehicle.

“Now, in the past the Buddha reviled the śrāvakas—those who yearned for the inferior teaching—in the presence of the bodhisattvas, but actually the Buddha inspired them also with the Mahayana. That is why we say that though we originally had no desire to seek the great treasure of the King of the Dharma it has now come to us unsought and unawaited. We have all attained what we should attain as the heirs of the Buddha.”

CHAPTER 5 (A) MEDICINAL HERBS

At that time the World Honored One told Mahakashyapa and all the great disciples, “Good indeed! Good indeed! Kasyapa has well spoken of the Thus Come One’s real and true merit and virtue. It is just as he said.

Furthermore, the Thus Come One has limitless, boundless *asamkheyas* of merit and virtue. If you were to speak of it throughout limitless millions of *eons*, you could not finish.

Kashyapa, you should know that the Thus Come One is the king of all the dharmas. Nothing that he teaches is false. He extensively proclaims all dharmas by means of wisdom and expedients, and whatever dharmas he speaks all lead to the ground of all wisdom.

The Thus Come One contemplates and knows the tendencies of all dharmas. He also knows the depths of the mental processes of all living beings, having penetrated them without obstruction. Furthermore, he has ultimate and clear understanding of all dharmas, and he instructs living beings in all-wisdom.

Kashyapa, consider the world of the three thousand great thousand worlds and the grasses, trees, forests, as well as the medicinal herbs, in their many varieties, with their different names and colors which the mountains, streams, valleys and flatlands produce.

A thick cloud spreads out, covering the three thousand great thousand worlds, raining on them equally everywhere at the same time, its moisture reaching every part. The grasses, trees, forests and medicinal herbs - those of small roots, small stalks, small branches and small leaves, those of medium-sized roots, medium-sized stalks, medium-sized branches, medium-sized leaves or those of large roots, large stalks, large branches, and large leaves and also all the trees, whether great or small according to their size, small, medium, or large, all receive a portion of it. From the rain of the one cloud each according to its nature grows, blossoms, and bears fruit.

Although they grow from the same ground and are moistened by the same rain, still, all the grasses and trees are different.

Kashyapa, you should know that the Thus Come One is also like this. He manifests in the world like a great cloud rising; with his great sound he covers the world with its gods, humans, and *asuras*, just like that great cloud covers the three thousand great thousand lands. In the midst of the great assembly he announces, “I am the Thus Come One, One Worthy of Offerings, One of Proper and Universal Knowledge, One Whose Understanding and Conduct Are Complete, Well Gone One Who Understands the World, an Unsurpassed Lord, a Taming and Regulating Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, the Buddha, the World Honored One. Those who have not yet been crossed over, I cross over.

Those who have not yet been liberated, I liberate. Those who have not yet been put at rest, I put at rest. Those who have not yet attained Nirvana, I cause to attain Nirvana. I know things as they really are, both in the present and in the future. I am the all-knowing one, the all-seeing one, the one who knows the Way, the one who opens the Way, the one who proclaims the Way. The entire assembly of gods, humans and *asuras*, all should come here to listen to the Dharma.”

Then, countless thousands of myriads of millions of kinds of living beings came before the Buddha to hear the Dharma.

Then, the Thus Come One, contemplating the sharpness and dullness of the faculties of these living beings, their vigor or laxness, according to their capacity, spoke the Dharma for their sakes in limitless varieties, causing them all to rejoice and quickly attain good benefit. After having heard this Dharma, all of these living beings presently are at ease; in the future, they will be born in a good place. By means of the Way, they will enjoy happiness and also be able to hear the Dharma. Having heard the Dharma, they will separate from all coverings and obstructions. Within all the dharmas, according to their powers, they will gradually gain entry to the Way.

“Just as that great cloud rains down on all the grasses, trees, forests, and medicinal herbs and each, according to its nature, fully receives the moisture and grows, so, too, the Thus Come One speaks of a Dharma having one mark and one taste, that is to say: the mark of liberation, the mark of extinction, culminating in the Wisdom of All Modes.

Those living beings who, hearing the Thus Come One’s Dharma, uphold, read, recite and cultivate it as taught will not themselves be aware of the merit and virtue they obtain.

What is the reason? Only the Thus Come One knows the kinds, the marks, the

substances, and the natures of these living beings, what they are recollecting, what they are thinking, and what they are cultivating; how they are recollecting, how they are thinking, and how they are cultivating; by means of what dharma they recollect, by means of what dharma they think, and by means of what dharma they cultivate; and by means of what dharma they obtain what dharma. Living beings dwell on a variety of levels. Only the Thus Come One sees them as they really are, clearly and without obstruction.

Just as those grasses, trees, and forests and all the medicinal herbs do not know themselves whether their natures are superior, middle, or inferior.

The Thus Come One knows the Dharma of one mark, of one flavor, that is to say: the mark of liberation, the mark of separation, the mark of extinction, the mark of ultimate Nirvana which is constantly still and extinct and which in the end returns to emptiness.

Already understanding this the Buddha contemplates the desires in the minds of living beings and protects them. For this reason he does not immediately speak of the Wisdom of All Modes.

Kashyapa, you are all very rare in your ability to know that the Thus Come One speaks the Dharma as it is appropriate, and in your ability to believe and accept it. Why is this? All the Buddhas, the World Honored Ones speak an appropriate Dharma which is difficult to understand, difficult to know.”

CHAPTER5 (B)

HERBS

Thereupon the Bhagavat addressed Mahākāśyapa and other great disciples saying: “Splendid! Splendid! O Kāśyapa! You have skillfully explained the real merit of the Tathāgata. It is exactly as you have said. The Tathāgata has immeasurable, unlimited, and incalculable merits. Thus even in a period of immeasurable koṭis of kalpas you will never fully be able to explain all of his merits.

“O Kāśyapa! You should know that the Tathāgata is the king of all the teaching. What he teaches is never false. He explains all the teaching using his wisdom and skillful means and what he teaches leads everyone to the stage of omniscience.

“The Tathāgata perceives the goal of all teachings and knows the underlying mental disposition of all sentient beings, perceiving all with no obstructions. He completely understands all teachings and displays omniscience to all sentient beings.

“O Kāśyapa! Suppose in the great manifold cosmos there are mountains, rivers, valleys, and plains where many kinds of grasses, trees, shrubs, and herbs of different names and colors grow. Dense clouds thoroughly cover this great manifold cosmos and rain falls at the same time everywhere, moistening the small, medium, and large roots, stems, branches, and leaves of all the grasses, trees, shrubs, and herbs.

“The sizes of all the trees depend on whether their capacities are superior, mediocre, or inferior; and the rain falling from the same cloud makes them grow according to the nature of their various seeds. Flowers blossom in the same place and fruit ripens in the same place moistened by the same rain, yet there are differences among these grasses and trees.

“O Kāśyapa! You should know that the Tathāgata is exactly like this. He appears in this world like a great overspreading cloud. His great voice resounds over the devas, humans, and asuras in the world, just as the great cloud thoroughly covers the great manifold cosmos. He declares to the assembly:

I am the Tathāgata, Arhat, Completely Enlightened, Perfect in Knowledge and Conduct, Well-Departed, Knower of the World, Unsurpassed, Tamer of Humans, Teacher of Devas and Humans, Buddha, Bhagavat. I set free those who have not been freed. I enlighten those who have not been enlightened and bring calm to those who have not been calmed. I cause those to obtain nirvana who have not yet obtained it. I am the one who knows the present and future worlds exactly as they are. I am the All-Knower, the All-Seer, the Knower of the Path, the One who discloses the path and explains it. All of you devas, humans, and asuras! Come and listen to my teachings.

“At that time innumerable thousands of myriads of koṭis of sentient beings approach the Buddha and listen to his teaching. Then the Tathāgata, perceiving the faculties of sentient beings—whether they are sharp or dull, diligent or idle—explains the teachings according to their capacities in a variety of immeasurable ways, gladdening and benefiting them all.

“Having heard his teaching, all of these beings are at peace in this world and are born into a good existence in the future. Through this they will receive peace of mind and be able to hear the teaching. Having already heard the teaching they will become free from obstructions and be able to gradually enter the path to the Dharma according to their capacities.

“Just like the great cloud that rains upon all the grasses, trees, shrubs, and herbs, whose seeds are watered and which grow according to their capacities, the Tathāgata teaches the Dharma of one aspect and character; that is to say, the character of liberation, dispassion, and cessation which ultimately leads to omniscience.

“Those sentient beings who hear, hold, and recite the teachings of the Tathāgata and practice it accordingly will nevertheless not perceive the merit that they have obtained.

“Why is this? Only the Tathāgata knows the seed, character, disposition, and capacity of sentient beings. Only he knows what they contemplate, think, and practice; how they contemplate, think, and practice; what teachings they contemplate, think, and practice; and what teaching they obtain through what teaching. Only the Tathāgata exactly perceives and knows without obstructions the various states in which sentient beings reside.

“It is just like the grasses, trees, shrubs, and herbs that do not know their own natures, whether they are superior, mediocre, or inferior. Yet the Tathāgata knows the teachings of one aspect and character, the character of liberation, dispassion, cessation, complete nirvana, and eternal tranquility which ultimately leads to emptiness.

“The Buddha knows this and perceives the aspirations of sentient beings. For this reason, in order to protect them, he does not immediately teach omniscience.

“O Kāśyapa! It is a rare thing that all of you know that the Tathāgata teaches according to your capacities and that you believe and accept it. “Why is this? Because the Dharma taught by all the Buddha Bhagavats, according to what is appropriate to sentient beings, is difficult to understand and difficult to know.”

CHAPTER 7

IMAGINARY CITY

Bhikshus, you should know, the expedients of the Thus Come One deeply enter the natures of living beings. Knowing that they aspire to and are content with lesser Dharmas and are deeply attached to the five desires, he speaks to them of Nirvana. When they hear him, then they immediately believe and accept it.

It is as if, for example, there is a road, five hundred *yojanas* long, steep, dangerous and bad, an uninhabited and terrifying place. A large group of people wish to travel this road to reach a cache of precious jewels. Among them, there is a guide, intelligent, wise and clear-headed, who knows the road well, both its passable and impassable features, and who wishes to lead the group through this hardship.

Midway, the group he is leading grows weary and wishes to turn back. They say to the guide, “we are exhausted and afraid. We cannot go forward. It’s too far. We want to turn back now.”

Their leader, who has many expedients, had this thought; “How pitiful they are. How can they renounce the great and precious treasure and wish to turn back?” Having had this thought, through the power of his expedient devices, he transforms a city in the center of the dangerous road, three hundred *yojanas* in extent, and says to them, “Do not be afraid. Do not turn back; Stay here now in this great city I have created just for you. If you go into this city, you will be happy and at peace. If you then wish to proceed to the jewel cache, you may do so.”

Then the exhausted group rejoiced greatly, having gained what they had never had. “We have now escaped this bad road and gained happiness and peace.” Then the group went forward and entered the transformed city; thinking that they had already been saved, they felt happy and at peace.

At that time, the guide, knowing that they were rested and no longer weary, made the city disappear, saying to them, “All of you, come, let us go. The jewel cache is near. The great city was merely something I created from transformation to give you a rest.”

Bhikshus, the Thus Come One is also like this. He now acts as a great guide for all of you. He knows that living beings should leave and cross over the evil road of the

torments of birth and death which is so steep, difficult and long. He shall respond to and save them.

If living beings only hear of the one Buddha Vehicle, they will not wish to see the Buddha or to draw near to him. Instead, they will think, “The Buddha path is long and far; it can only be accomplished after much labor and suffering.” The Buddha knows their minds to be weak and lowly. When they reach the “Midway-Nirvana”, he uses the power of expedients to rest at the Midway and to speak of the two Nirvanas. If living beings dwell on these two levels, the Thus Come One then tells them, “You have not yet finished your job. The level you are dwelling at is near the Buddhas’ wisdom. You should observe and ponder this: the Nirvana you have attained is not the real one. The Thus Come One has but used the power of his expedients and, within the one Buddha Vehicle, discriminated and spoken of three.”

He is like that guide, who, in order to give the travelers a rest, conjured up a great city. Then, when they had rested, he told them, “the place of the jewels is near. This city is not real, but merely something I have conjured up.”

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

“The Buddha Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory
Sat in the Bodhimanda for ten eons,
Without the manifestation of the Buddhadharma,
And he did not realize the Buddha Way.

Heavenly spirits and dragon kings,
And the host of asuras,
Constantly rained down heavenly flowers,
As an offering to that Buddha.

The Gods beat upon their heavenly drums
And made all kinds of music;
Fragrant breezes blew away the withered flowers
And fine, new ones rained down.

When ten eons had passed,
He then realized the Buddha Way.
All the gods and humans,

Danced for the joy within their minds.

The sixteen sons of that Buddha
As well as their retinues,
Thousands of millions surrounding them,
All went before that Buddha.

They bowed with their heads at his feet
And asked him to turn the Dharma-wheel,
“May the sagely lion’s Dharma rain
Fill us and everyone!”

A World Honored One is very hard to encounter,
Appearing but once in a long time.
In order to awaken all creatures,
He shakes all things.

In five hundred myriads of millions of lands,
In worlds in the eastern direction,
Brahma palaces shone with a light
Such as they never had before.

The Brahmas, seeing these signs,
Followed them to the Buddha.
They scattered flowers as an offering,
And offered up their palaces,
Asking the Buddha to turn the Dharma-wheel,
With verses in his praise.

The Buddha knew the time had not yet come
And received their request seated in silence.
From the other three directions, and four points in between,
And, likewise, from above, and below,
They scattered flowers and offered their palaces,
Asking the Buddha to turn the Dharma-wheel:
“The World Honored One is very hard to meet;
We pray that through his great compassion and pity
He will open wide the sweet dew door
And turn the supreme Dharma-wheel.”

The World Honored One, having limitless wisdom,
Received the multitude's request
And proclaimed various Dharmas for their sakes.
The Four Truths, the Twelve Conditions,
From ignorance up to old age and death —
All arise because of birth.

In this way the host of calamities comes to be;
You should all know this.
When he expounded on this Dharma
Six hundred myriads of millions of billions
Exhausted the limits of all suffering
And all became Arhats.

When he spoke the Dharma the second time,
Hosts like the sands of a thousand myriads of Ganges rivers
Their minds grasping no dharmas,
Also attained Arhatship.

After that, those who gained the Way,
Were incalculable in number;
Were one to count through myriads of millions of eons
One could not reach their limit.

At that time, the sixteen princes,
Left home and became Shramaneras.
Together they requested that the Buddha
Extensively proclaim the Dharma of the Great Vehicle:

“May we and our followers
All perfect the Buddha Way.
We wish to become like the World Honored One,
With the Wisdom Eye and foremost purity.”

The Buddha, knowing the intentions of the youths,
Their practices in former lives,
Used limitless causes and conditions
And various analogies,

To reach them the Six Paramitas,
As well as matters of spiritual penetrations.

He discriminated the real Dharma,
And the pathway walked by the Bodhisattvas.
He spoke the Dharma Flower Sutra
Its verses in numbers like Ganges' sands.

After the Buddha had spoken the Sutra
In a quiet room he entered dhyana Samadhi
Singlemindedly sitting in one place,
For eighty-four thousand eons.

All the Shramaneras,
Knowing the Buddha had not yet left dhyana,
For the sake of the limitless millions assembled,
Spoke of the Buddha's unsurpassed wisdom.

Each seated on his Dharma throne,
Spoke this Great Vehicle Sutra.
After the Buddha had become peacefully still,
They propagated and taught the Dharma.

Each one of the Shramaneras
Took across living beings
To the number of grains of sand
In six hundred myriads of Ganges rivers.

After that Buddha had crossed over into extinction,
All those who heard the Dharma,
In whatever Buddhalands they might be,
Were reborn there together with their teachers.

The sixteen Shramaneras
Perfectly practiced the Buddha Path.
Presently in the ten directions
Each has realized proper enlightenment.

Those who heard the Dharma then,

Are each in the presence of a Buddha;
Those who are Hearers,
Are gradually taught the Buddha Path.

I was one of the sixteen;
In the past, I taught all of you.
I therefore use expedients
To draw you into the Buddha's wisdom.

Through these former causal conditions,
I presently speak The Dharma Flower Sutra,
Leading you to enter the Buddha Path.
Take care not to become frightened.

Suppose there is a steep and bad road,
Remote and teeming with venomous beasts,
Lacking, as well, water or grass
--A place feared by all.

Countless thousands of myriads
Wish to traverse this dangerous road
With its pathways so distant,
Extending five hundred yojanas.

There is among them a guide,
Intelligent and wise,
Clear and resolute in mind,
Who can rescue them from their difficulty.

The group grows weary
And says to the guide,
"We are all exhausted, now
And want to turn back."

The guide thinks to himself,
"How very pitiful they are.
How can they wish to turn back
And lose the great and precious treasure?"

Instantly he thinks of a device:
Using the power of spiritual penetrations
He conjures up a great city
Adorned with houses,
Surrounded by gardens and groves,
Brooks and bathing ponds,
Layered gates and tiered pavilions,
Filled with men and women.

After creating this,
He pities them saying, "Do not be afraid.
But go into this city
And enjoy yourselves as you wish."

When they had entered the city,
They rejoiced greatly at heart
Thinking they were safe and sound,
And that they had been saved.

The guide, knowing they were rested,
Assembled them together and said,
"You should all go forward,
For this is nothing but a transformed city.

Seeing that you were exhausted
And wanted to turn back midway,
I used the power of expedients,
To transform provisionally this city.
You should now be vigorous
And proceed to the jewel cache."

I, too, am like this,
I am the guide of all;

Seeing those who seek the way,
Exhausted in mid-course
Unable to cross the dangerous paths,
Of birth, death and affliction,
Therefore, I use the power of expedients,

To speak of Nirvana and give them a rest,
Saying, "Your sufferings are ended.

You have done what you had to do.
Then, knowing they have reached Nirvana,
And had all become Arhats,
I gather them together,
To teach them the genuine Dharma.

The Buddhas use the power of expedients,
To discriminate and speak of three vehicles
But there is only the one Buddha Vehicle.
The other two were spoken as a resting place.
What I am telling you now is the truth;
What you have gained is not extinction.

For the sake of the Buddha's All Wisdom,
You should exert yourselves with great vigor.
When you have certified to All Wisdom,
And have the Ten Powers and other Buddhadharma
And have perfected the thirty-two marks,
Then that is genuine extinction.
The Buddhas, the guiding masters,
Speak of Nirvana to give living beings rest,
But once they know that they are rested,
They lead them into the Buddhas' wisdom."

Verse In Summary

Moistening all the three dispositions
The disciples receive the (Buddha's) kindness;
But the transformed city is falsely created and is not real.
One takes another look at the causes behind (the Buddha Great Penetrating Wisdom
Victory)
So the sixteen grandsons,
In the eight directions, certify to a golden body.

Homage to the Dharma Flower Assembly of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
Homage to the Dharma Flower Assembly of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
Homage to the Dharma Flower Assembly of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

CHAPTER 7 (B) THE APPARITIONAL CITY

The Buddha addressed the monks, saying: “Once upon a time, immeasurable, limitless, inconceivable, incalculable kalpas ago, there was a buddha called Mahābhijñāñānābhibhū Tathāgata, an Arhat, Completely Enlightened, Perfect in Knowledge and Conduct, Well-Departed, Knower of the World, Unsurpassed, Tamer of Humans, Teacher of Devas and Humans, Buddha, Bhagavat. His land was called Susambhavā in the kalpa called Mahārūpa.

“O monks, it has been an extremely long time since this buddha entered nirvana. Suppose there were a man who ground the earth of the entire great manifold cosmos into powdered ink, and he were to then pass through a thousand worlds to the east, where he let fall a single particle of ink, the size of a speck of dust.

“After passing through another thousand worlds, he let fall another particle; and he continued in this way until he had completely used all the ink. “What do you think about this? Do you think that a mathematician or a mathematician’s pupil would be able to count those worlds to the last particle or not?”

“O Bhagavat! No, they could not.”

“O monks! Suppose that all the worlds this man passed through, whether letting fall a particle or not, were all ground into dust, and one speck of this dust were equal to one kalpa. The time since the parinirvāṇa of this buddha surpasses this number by immeasurable, limitless, incalculable hundreds of thousands of myriads of koṭis of kalpas; and through the power of the Tathāgata’s wisdom and insight, I can see his distant past, as if it were today.” ...

“You should know, O monks, that the Tathāgata through skillful means deeply penetrates the dispositions of sentient beings. Knowing their inclination toward the inferior teachings and that they are deeply attached to the desires of the five senses, he teaches nirvana for their sake. If they listen, they will accept it.

“Suppose in a desolate, fearful place there were a dangerous road five hundred yojanas long. There is a large group that wants to travel along this road to reach a place where there is great treasure. They have a leader who is wise and penetrating and who knows the passable and impassable parts of this dangerous road very well. Although he wants to guide these people past the danger, they become exhausted along the way. Addressing the leader they say:

We are extremely tired and frightened. We cannot go any further. We are still far away from our destination, and we want to turn back.

“The leader, knowing many skillful means, thinks:

These people are to be pitied. How could they want to turn back and abandon the great treasure?

“After thinking this the leader, through his skillful means, magically creates a city three hundred yojanas away along the dangerous road. He addresses the people, saying:

Do not be frightened. Do not turn back! You may now stay in this great city and be at your leisure. If you enter this city, you can be comfortable and at ease. Once you are able to go on and reach the treasure site, then you can depart once more.

“Then the exhausted people rejoice greatly and praise this unprecedented experience, saying:

We are now free of this evil road and will be comfortable and at ease.

“Then they proceed to the apparitional city and enter it. They believe that their hardships are over and feel at ease. Then the leader realizes that they are rested and their fatigue has gone. He immediately makes the apparitional city vanish and says to the people: All of you, come along! The treasure site is near. I made that great apparitional city only in order to let you rest.

“O monks! The Tathāgata is exactly like this. Now for your sake he has become a great leader who knows the long, dangerous, and evil road of birth, death, and desire’s confusion. You should leave it and be saved.

“If sentient beings hear only about the single buddha vehicle they will then want neither to see nor approach a buddha. They will think that the buddha path is long and attainable only after enduring severe and protracted suffering. The Buddha, knowing their minds, knowing that they are weak-willed and of lowly aspiration, teaches them the two nirvanas through skillful means in order to let them rest halfway to the goal. If there are sentient beings who abide in either of these two stages, the Tathāgata immediately teaches:

What you have accomplished is not complete. The stage you abide in is close to the wisdom of the buddhas. You should observe and consider that the nirvana you have obtained is not the true one. It is only through the power of the Tathāgata’s skillful means that the single buddha vehicle is explained as three.

“The Buddha is just like that leader who conjured a great apparitional city to let the people rest. Knowing that they were rested, he addressed them, saying: “The treasure site is near. This city is not real. It is only my invention.”

CHAPTER 8 (A)

JEWEL IN THE ROBE

At that time, the five hundred Arhats, having received predictions from the Buddha, jumped for joy.

They rose from their seats and went before the Buddha, bowing with their heads at his feet. Repenting of their errors, they reproached themselves, saying, “World Honored One, we had always thought that we had already gained ultimate extinction. Now we know that we were like unknowing ones. Why is this? We should have obtained the Thus Come One's wisdom, but were content instead with lesser knowledge.”

“World Honored One, it is like a person who goes to a close friend's house, gets drunk on wine, and lies down. His friend who is about to go away on official business, sews a priceless pearl inside his clothing as a gift, and then leaves.”

“That person, in a drunken stupor, is not aware of anything.”

“On arising, he sets out on his travels and reaches another country, where, for the sake of clothing and food, he expends much effort, endures great hardships, and is content with whatever little he may get.”

Later, his close friend happens to meet him again and says, “Hey man! How can you, for the sake of food and clothing, have come to this?”

Long ago, wishing you to gain peace, happiness, and enjoyment of the five desires, on such and such a day, month, and year, I sewed a priceless pearl into your clothing. From of old until now, it has been present, but you did not know of it. Thus you have toiled and suffered to gain your livelihood. How stupid of you!

You may now take this jewel, exchange it for what you need, and you will always have whatever you wish and be free from want.

The Buddha is also like this. When he was a Bodhisattva, he taught and transformed us, causing us to bring forth the thought of All-Wisdom.

But, we later completely forgot, and were unknowing and unaware.

Having attained the way of Arhatship, we said of ourselves that we had gained extinction. In the difficulty of maintaining our livelihood, we were content with what little we had gained.

Still, our vows for All Wisdom remain; they have not been lost. Now, the World Honored One has caused us to wake up, saying, “Bhikshus! What you have obtained is not ultimate extinction!”

‘For a long time, I have been leading you to plant good roots with the Buddha. As an expedient device, I manifested the marks of *Nirvana*. You said of yourself however, that you had actually attained extinction.’

“World Honored One, now at last we know that we are actually Bodhisattvas; having obtained a prediction for *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*. For this reason we rejoice greatly, having gained what we never had before.”

Then, Ajnatakaundinya and others, spoke verses saying,

“Hearing the supreme sound
Of the prediction of peace and tranquility,
We rejoice, gaining what we never had,
And bow before the Buddha of limitless wisdom.

Now, in the presence of the World Honored One,
We repent of our faults and mistakes.
Of the limitless jewels of the Buddha,
We had gained but a small portion of Nirvana,
And, like unknowing, senseless people,
Contented ourselves with that.

It is like a poor person,
Who goes to a close friend's home,
A very wealthy household,
Stocked with delicacies.

Taking a priceless pearl
The friend sews it in the poor man's clothing
And silently departs,
While the poor man sleeps unaware.

When the man arises,
He travels to another land,
Where, seeking food and clothes to stay alive,
He suffers many difficulties, and
Satisfied with what little he may get,
Wishes for nothing better.
He is unaware that within his clothing
There is a priceless pearl.

The friend who gave him the pearl
Later sees the poor man again,
And having bitterly rebuked him,
Shows him the pearl he sewed in his clothing.

Seeing the pearl, the poor man's heart
Gave rise to great rejoicing.
Rich with much wealth
He enjoys the five desirable objects.

We, too, are like this
In the long night, the World Honored One
Has constantly pitied, seen, taught and transformed us.
Causing us to plant the supreme vows.

But, because we lacked wisdom
We were unaware and did not know,
And, gaining a small portion of Nirvana
We were satisfied and sought nothing more.

Now the Buddha has awakened us,
Saying this is not really extinction.
Gaining the Buddha's supreme wisdom,
That is true extinction.

Now, having heard from the Buddha
Of the matters of predictions and adornments,
And these predictions having been bestowed in succession,
We rejoice in body and in mind.

CHAPTER 8 (B)

THE FIVE HUNDRED DISCIPLES RECEIVE THEIR PREDICTIONS

At that time, Pūrṇa, the son of Maitrāyaṇī, after hearing the Buddha teach the Dharma according to what is appropriate to sentient beings through the wisdom of skillful means and bestow the prediction of highest, complete enlightenment on all the great disciples, and then hearing stories about past causes and conditions and that all the buddhas have obtained perfect mastery of transcendent powers, obtained an unprecedented experience and became pure in mind and joyful. He immediately rose from his seat, went into the presence of the Buddha, bowed until his forehead touched the Buddha's feet, and then stood to one side gazing unwaveringly at the Buddha and thought this:

The Bhagavat is truly marvelous. His actions are rare. He teaches the Dharma according to the natural capacities of the beings in the world through skillful means, wisdom, and insight. He leads sentient beings away from their various attachments. We have no words to describe the Buddha's qualities. Only the Buddha, the Bhagavat, is able to know our deep intentions and original vow. ..

Thereupon the five hundred arhats, having obtained their predictions from the Buddha, were joyful and ecstatic. They rose from their seats, approached the Buddha, bowed until their foreheads touched his feet, repented of their faults, and reproached themselves, saying: "O Bhagavat! We have always thought we had attained complete nirvana. We now realize that we were ignorant. Why is this? We should have attained the wisdom of the Tathāgatas. Yet we were satisfied with little wisdom!

"O Bhagavat! Suppose there were a man who came to the house of a close friend and went to sleep after becoming intoxicated with wine. The intimate friend, having to go out on official business, sews a priceless jewel into the inside of his friend's garment and, giving it to him, leaves. But the man who was drunk and asleep is totally unaware of this. After getting up he leaves and roams around until he arrives in another country. Although he diligently seeks for food and clothing they are very difficult to obtain. He is satisfied if he just obtains a very meager amount. Later on the intimate friend happens to meet this man. Seeing him, he says:

O poor fellow! How have you come to this state through lack of food and clothing? Once, on such-and-such a day in such-and-such a month and year, I sewed a priceless

jewel into the inside of your garment, wanting to make things easier for you and to let you enjoy the desires of the five senses as much as you wished.

It is still there, although you aren't aware of it, and you seek your livelihood with great effort and hardship! You have been very foolish. Sell this jewel and use it to buy what you need. From now on you will know neither poverty nor want and can live as you wish.

“The Buddha is exactly like this. When he was a bodhisattva he aroused in us the aspiration for omniscience. Nevertheless we forgot, we did not know or understand. We attained the path of the arhats and considered that we had attained nirvana. It was very hard for us to support ourselves and we were satisfied with little. But we never fully lost our wish for all-knowledge. Now the Bhagavat, perceiving our minds, has said this:

O monks! What you have attained is not the complete nirvana. For a long time I have made you plant the various roots of good merit of a buddha and shown you the marks of nirvana through skillful means. That is why you consider yourselves to have actually attained nirvana!

“O Bhagavat! We now know that we are actually bodhisattvas and will obtain a prediction of highest, complete enlightenment. For this reason we are extremely happy at having obtained such an unprecedented experience.”

CHAPTER 14 (A)

HAPPILY DWELLING CONTACT

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

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

“Manjushri, in the future age, when the Dharma is about to become extinct, it will be impossible to trouble or confuse a Bodhisattva Mahasattva who has accomplished this third happily-dwelling conduct when he is speaking the Dharma. He shall gain good fellow students with whom he may read and recite this Sutra. Large assemblies will gather to listen to and accept it. Having heard it, they will uphold it; having upheld it, they will recite it; having recited it, they will be able to speak it; having spoken it, they will be able to write it out; to cause others to write it out; to make offerings to it; to revere, honor, and praise it.”

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

“If one wishes to speak this Sutra
He should rid himself of envy, anger, and arrogance,
Flattery and deceitful thoughts.
His practice should be honest and straightforward;

He should not ridicule others
Or speak lightly of the Dharma,
Or cause others to have doubts
By telling them they shall not obtain Buddhahood.

When this son of the Buddha speaks the Dharma,
He is ever gentle, agreeable and patient,
Compassionate towards all
And never slack in his efforts.

The great Bodhisattvas of the ten directions
Take pity on the multitudes and so practice the Way.
He should bring forth a heart of reverence,
Thinking, "These are my great teachers."

With regard to all the Buddhas, World Honored Ones,
He should think of them as his supreme fathers.
He should break through all thoughts of arrogance
And then speak the Dharma without obstacle.

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

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

"He should think, 'People like this are missing a great deal. Although the Tathagata speaks the Dharma expediently and appropriately, they do not hear, know, or awaken to it. They do not inquire into it, believe it, or understand it.'"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

them the city of Nirvana, telling them that they shall attain cessation. He guides their thoughts, causing them all to rejoice.”

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 14 (B)

EASE IN PRACTICE

Thereupon the Prince of the Dharma, Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Mañjuśrī addressed the Buddha, saying: “O Bhagavat! These bodhisattvas are very rare. In respectful obedience to the Buddha they have made this great vow: ‘In the troubled world to come, we will preserve, recite, and teach this Lotus Sutra!’

“O Bhagavat! How can these bodhisattva mahāsattvas teach this sutra in the troubled world to come?”

The Buddha addressed Mañjuśrī, saying: “If the bodhisattva mahāsattvas want to teach this sutra in the troubled world to come, they should abide in the four kinds of practices. The first is to establish the sphere of their bodhi- sattva practice and the sphere of their relationships and thereupon expound this sutra for the sake of sentient beings.

“O Mañjuśrī! What is the sphere of the practice of the bodhisattva mahāsattva? If a bodhisattva mahāsattva abides in the stage of perseverance, is gentle, tranquil, nonviolent, and unafraid; and furthermore if he remains unmoved with regard to existent things and perceives them in their true aspect, and neither acts nor discriminates, this is called the sphere of the practice of the bodhisattva mahāsattva.

“What is the sphere of the relationships of the bodhisattva mahāsattva? The bodhisattva mahāsattva should not consort with kings, princes, ministers, and chief officials. He should not consort with heretics, brahmans, Jains, and others, or with worldly writers, critics of poetry, materialists, or extreme materialists. Nor should he become acquainted with pranksters, boxers, wrestlers, clowns, and various jugglers, nor with outcastes and people who raise boars, sheep, chickens, and dogs, nor with hunters, fishermen, and those with evil conduct. A bodhisattva should teach such people the Dharma if they come to him, but expect nothing.

“Nor should a bodhisattva consort with monks, nuns, laymen, and lay- women who seek the śrāvaka vehicle. Nor should he greet them. The bodhi- sattva should avoid their company in chambers, on roads, or while in lecture halls, and not remain with them. If they come, teach them the Dharma according to their capacities, but expect nothing!

“Moreover, O Mañjuśrī! The bodhisattva mahāsattva should expound the teaching without any thought of desire for, or wish to see, a woman’s body. “If a bodhisattva enters someone else’s home he should not talk to young girls, maidens, and widows. A bodhisattva should also not approach the five kinds of impotent men nor be intimate with them. He should not enter some- one else’s home alone; and if for any reason he should enter it alone a bodhi- sattva should do nothing but singlemindedly contemplate the Buddha. “If he should teach the Dharma to women he should not show his teeth when smiling nor reveal his chest. A bodhisattva should not be intimate with them even for the sake of the Dharma. How much less for other things! “A bodhisattva should take no pleasure in keeping young disciples, śrāmaṇeras, or young boys. Nor should he take pleasure in having the same teacher as them. He should always take pleasure in meditation and, in a quiet place, practice to control his mind. O Mañjuśrī! This is what is known as the first sphere of relationships.

“Furthermore, the bodhisattva mahāsattvas perceive the emptiness of all dharmas in their true aspect. All things are unerring, unmoving, nonre- turning, irreversible, and like empty space which lacks substance. They are beyond all language. They are not produced, nor do they emerge, nor do they arise. They do not have any name or mark, and in reality they have no substance. They are immeasurable, limitless, without obstacles or obstructions. They exist only through dependent origination, arising through error. That is why I teach the permanent joy of perceiving the aspects of all existent things in this way. This is what is known as the second sphere of relationships of a bodhisattva mahāsattva.” ...

“O Mañjuśrī! Even the title of this Lotus Sutra cannot be heard in incalculable lands. How much more is it unable to be seen, accepted, preserved, and recited!

“O Mañjuśrī! Suppose a very powerful noble emperor wanted to sub- due other countries with his might, but the lesser kings would not obey his command. In such a case the noble emperor gathers an army together to over- come them. He recognizes the soldiers who have committed brave deeds in war and, greatly rejoicing, he bestows boons according to their merit, such as estates, villages, cities, garments, ornaments, various treasures, gold, silver, lapis lazuli, mother-of-pearl, agate, coral, amber, elephants, horses, chariots, servants, and subjects, but he never gives them the precious jewel in his topknot. Why is this? Because only the noble emperor has this precious jewel in his topknot. If the emperor gives it away his attendants would certainly be very surprised and mistrustful.

“O Mañjuśrī! The Tathāgata is exactly like this. He has attained the land of the Dharma through his powers of concentration and wisdom. Thus he has become the king of the triple world. Since the māra kings will not obey him, the wise and noble generals of the Tathāgata come to do battle with them. The Tathāgata rejoices at the meritorious ones and teaches various sutras to the fourfold assembly, gladdening them. He bestows upon them the property of all the teachings about concentrations, liberations, faculties with- out corruption, and powers. He also bestows upon them the city of nirvana. Saying that they have attained nirvana, he leads their minds onward and gladdens them all. And yet he does not teach them the Lotus Sutra.

“O Mañjuśrī! It is just as if the noble emperor finally gives the jewel that has been long concealed in his topknot. Although he perceived the great merit of those soldiers and was deeply pleased, he did not rashly give them the marvelous jewel. The Tathāgata is also exactly like this. Since he is the great King of the Dharma in the triple world he inspires all the sentient beings through the Dharma. When he sees the wise and noble soldiers who have done battle with the māra of the five aggregates, the māra of desires, and the māra of death, who have great merit in battle, and have extinguished the three poisons, left the triple world, and broken out of Māra’s net, he then rejoices greatly. He

now teaches the Lotus Sutra, which is treated with hostility by the entire world and is difficult to believe in, and which he has never taught before, and enables sentient beings to attain omniscience.

“O Mañjuśrī! This Lotus Sutra is the ultimate teaching of all the Tathāgatas, the most profound among all the teachings, and conferred at the very end. It was in the same way that the very powerful and noble emperor gave the jewel after having preserved it for a long time.

“O Mañjuśrī! This Lotus Sutra is the secret treasure house of all the Buddha Tathāgatas, and the foremost among all the sutras. The Buddha has preserved it for a long time and he has not taught it indiscriminately. Now, for the first time he teaches it.”

CHAPTER 16 (A)

THE THUS COME ONE'S LIFESPAN

Further, Good Men, the Dharma of all the Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, is like this and used to save living beings. It is entirely true and not false.”

“It is as if there were a good physician, wise and well-versed in the medical arts and intelligent, who is skillful at healing the multitude of sicknesses. The man also has many sons—ten, twenty or even a hundred. Then, called away on business, he travels to a far-off country.”

“Meanwhile, the children drink some poison, which causes them to roll on the ground in delirium.”

“Just then their father returns home. Because they drank the poison, some of the sons have lost their senses, while others have not. Seeing their father at a distance, they are all greatly happy. They bow to him, kneel, and inquire after him. ‘Welcome back in peace and safety. In our foolishness, we took some poison by mistake. We pray that you will rescue and heal us, and will restore our lives to us.’”

“Seeing his children in such agony, the father consults his medical texts and then searches for fine herbs of good color, aroma, and flavor. He then grinds, sifts, and mixes them together, and gives the compound to his sons to take .”

“He says to them, ‘This is an excellent medicine of good color, aroma, and flavor. Take it. Your agony will be relieved, and you will suffer no further torment.’”

“Some among the children have not lost their senses. Seeing the fine medicine with its good color and aroma they immediately take it, and their sickness is completely cured.”

“Although the others who have lost their senses rejoice in their father’s arrival, have inquired after his well-being, and have sought to be cured of their illnesses, they refuse to take the medicine. What is the reason? The poisonous vapors have entered them so deeply that they have lost their senses, and so they say that the medicine of good color and aroma is not good.”

“The father then thinks, ‘How pitiful these children are. The poison has confused their

minds. Although they rejoice to see me and ask me to rescue and cure them, still they refuse such good medicine as this. I should now set up an expedient device to induce them to take this medicine.’”

“Immediately he says, ‘You should know that I am now old and weak, and my time of death has arrived. I will now leave this good medicine here for you to take. Have no worries about not recovering.’ Having instructed them in this way, he then returns to the far-off country and sends a messenger back to announce, ‘Your father is dead.’”

“When the children hear that their father is dead, their hearts are struck with grief, and they think, ‘If our father was here, he would be compassionate and pity us, and we would have a savior and protector. Now he has forsaken us to die in another country, leaving us orphaned with no one to rely upon.’ Constantly grieving, their minds then become awakened. They understand that the medicine has good color, aroma, and flavor. They take it immediately, and their poisonous sickness is completely cured.”

“The father, hearing that his sons have been completely cured, then comes back, and they all see him.”

“Good men, what do you think, could anyone say that this good physician has committed the offense of false speech?”

“No, World Honored One.”

The Buddha said, “I, too, am like that. I realized Buddhahood limitless, boundless, hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of nayutas of asamkhyeyas of eons ago. For the sake of living beings, I employ the power of expedients and say that I am about to enter quiescence. There is no one who can rightly say that I have committed the offense of false speech.”

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

“From the time I attained Buddhahood,
The eons that have passed
Are limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads
Of kotis of asamkhyeyas in number.
I always speak the Dharma to teach and transform
Countless millions of living beings,

So they enter the Buddha-Way.

And throughout these limitless eons,
In order to save living beings,
I expediently manifest Nirvana.
But in truth I do not pass into quiescence.
I remain here always speaking the Dharma.

I always stay right here,
And using the power of spiritual penetrations,
I cause inverted living beings,
Although near me, not to see me.

The multitudes see me as passing into quiescence.
They extensively make offerings to my sharira.
All cherish ardent longing for me,
And their hearts look up to me in thirst.

Living beings, then faithful and subdued,
Straightforward, with compliant minds,
Single-mindedly wish to see the Buddha,
Caring not for their very lives.

At that time I and the Sangha assembly
All appear together on Magic Vulture Mountain,
Where I say to living beings
That I am always here and never cease to be.

But using the power of expedient devices
I manifest "ceasing" and "not-ceasing" to be.
For living beings in other lands,
Reverent, faithful, and aspiring,
I speak the Unsurpassed Dharma;
But you who do not hear this
Think that I have passed into quiescence.

I see living beings
Sunk in misery, and yet

I refrain from manifesting for them.
In order to cause them to look up in thirst,

Then, when their minds are filled with longing,
I emerge and speak the Dharma.

With such powerful spiritual penetrations,
Throughout asamkhyeyas of eons,
I remain always on Magic Vulture Mountain
And also dwell in other places.

When beings see the eon ending
And ravaged by the great fire,
My land is peaceful and secure,
Always filled with gods and humans,
Gardens and groves, halls and pavilions,
And various precious adornments.
There are jeweled trees with many flowers and fruits
Where living beings roam in delight.

The gods play celestial drums,
Always making various kinds of music,
And mandarava flowers
Are scattered on the Buddha and the great assembly.
My Pure Land is not destroyed,
But the multitudes see it being burned entirely.
Worried, terrified, and miserable,
Such ones are everywhere.

All these beings with offenses,
Because of their evil karmic causes and conditions,
Pass through asamkhyeyas of eons,
Without hearing the name of the Triple Jewel.

All who have cultivated merit and virtue,
Who are compliant, agreeable, and honest—
They all see me
Here, speaking the Dharma.
Sometimes for this assembly,

I speak of the Buddha's life span as limitless.

To those who see the Buddha only after long intervals,
I speak of the Buddha as being difficult to meet.

The power of my wisdom—
The unlimited illumination of my wisdom—
Is such that my life span is one of countless eons
Attained through long cultivation and work.

Those of you with wisdom,
Should not have doubts about this.
Cut them off entirely, and forever,
For the Buddha's words are real, not false.

They are like the clever expedients of the physician
Who, to cure his insane children,
Is actually alive, yet says he is dead,
And none can say that he speaks falsely.

I, too, am like a father to the world,
Saving all from suffering and woe.
But to living beings, inverted as they are,
I speak of cessation, although I actually remain.

Otherwise, because they often see me,
They would grow arrogant and lax.
Unruly and attached to the five desires,
They would tumble into the evil paths.

I am ever aware of living beings—
Those who practice the Way and those who do not.
I speak various Dharmas for their sakes
To save them in an appropriate manner.
I am always thinking,
'How can I cause living beings
To enter the unsurpassed Way
And to quickly perfect the body of a Buddha?'"

CHAPTER 16(B)

THE LIFESPAN OF THE TATHAGATA

Thereupon the Buddha addressed the bodhisattvas and the entire great assembly, saying: “O sons of a virtuous family! You should believe the true words of the Tathāgata.”

He addressed the great assembly again, saying: “You should believe the Tathāgata’s true words.” He repeated this to them, saying: “You should believe the Tathāgata’s true words.”

Then the great assembly of bodhisattvas, headed by Maitreya, addressed the Buddha with their palms pressed together, saying: “O Bhagavat! We entreat you to explain it. We will accept the Buddha’s words.”

After they had spoken in this way three times, they again said: “We entreat you to explain it. We will accept the Buddha’s words.” ...

“Furthermore, O sons of a virtuous family, the teaching of all the Buddha Tathāgatas is exactly like this. It is entirely true, never false, all for the sake of saving sentient beings.

“Suppose there were an excellent doctor. He is wise, knowledgeable, his prescriptions are effective, and he has skillfully cured a variety of diseases. This man has many sons, say ten, twenty, or even one hundred in number. For some reason, he has to go far off to another country and, while he is away, his children, whom he has left behind, drink some poison. The poison starts to take effect and they roll on the ground in agony.

“At this moment their father returns home. Some of the children who have taken the poison are delirious, while others are not. Seeing their father in the distance they all rejoice greatly and kneeling respectfully address him, saying:

It is good that you have returned safely. In our ignorance we took this poison by mistake. We entreat you to cure and save us, and restore us to life.

“Seeing his children suffering in this way, the father searches for beneficial herbs possessed of good color, aroma, and flavor, according to the medical manual. Blending them together after grinding and sifting, he gives the mixture to the children and says:

This is an extremely beneficial medicine with good color, aroma, and flavor. All of you take it! It will quickly remove your pain and you will never be afflicted again.

“Then the children who have not become delirious see this beneficial medicine of good color and aroma, and immediately take it. The affliction is completely removed and they are cured. The remaining children, those who are delirious, seeing their father coming to them, rejoice and ask him to seek a cure for their illness. Although he offers them the medicine, they will not take it. Why is this? The poison has so deeply penetrated them that they have become delirious. They do not think that the medicine with good color and aroma is good.

“The father thinks:

These children are to be pitied. The poison has completely warped their minds. Although they rejoiced upon seeing me and sought a cure they will not take this beneficial medicine. I will now cause them to take this medicine through skillful means.

“Then he says to them:

You should know that I am now old and feeble, close to death. I will now leave this beneficial medicine here. You should take it. Do not worry about not recovering.

“Having left these instructions he goes to another country and sends a messenger back home to tell them: ‘Your father has already died.’ Upon hearing that their father is dead, the children become very distressed and think:

If our father had lived he would have taken pity on us and protected us. But now, abandoning us, he has died in a distant country.

“They now consider themselves orphans having no one to rely upon. Through constant grieving their minds become clear, and only then do they realize that the medicine has fine color, aroma, and flavor. They immediately take it and the poison is completely driven out. The father, hearing that all his children have completely recovered, immediately returns and makes his appearance.”

The Buddha then asked the bodhisattvas: “O sons of a virtuous family! Do you think there is anyone who would say that this good doctor is guilty of lying?”

The bodhisattvas replied: “No, we do not, O Bhagavat!”

The Buddha said: “I am just like this. Since I became a buddha, immeasurable, limitless, hundreds of thousands of myriads of koṭis of nayutas of incalculable kalpas have passed. Though for the sake of sentient beings, I use skillful means and say that I will enter parinirvāṇa, there is no one who could rightly say that I am guilty of falsehood.”

