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SCRIPTURE OF

THE LOTUS BLOSSOM

OF THE FINE DHARMA

{THE LOTUS SŪTRA}

Translated from the Chinese of Kumārajīva by

Leon Hurvitz

REVISED EDITION



Columbia University Press

New York

PARABLE

AT THAT time Śāriputra danced for joy, then straightway rose and, joining his palms and looking reverently at the august countenance, addressed the Buddha, saying: "Now that I have heard this dharma sound from the World-Honored One, I have in my heart the thought of dancing for joy. I have gained something I never had before. What is the reason? Formerly, when I heard such a dharma as this from the Buddha, I saw the bodhisattvas receive the prophecy that they should become buddhas; but we had no part in this. I was sorely grieved that I was to miss the incalculable knowledge and insight of the Thus Come One. World-Honored One, in the past I have dwelt alone in mountain forests and at the foot of trees; and, whether sitting or walking, I always had this thought: 'We have all entered identically into dharma-hood. How is it that the Thus Come One shows us salvation by resort to the dharma of the lesser vehicle? This is our fault, not that of the World-Honored One. What is the reason? Had we waited for him to preach that on which the achievement of anuttarasamyaksam̄bodhi is based, then without fail we should have attained salvation through the greater vehicle. However, since we did not understand that the preaching had been based on expedient devices and accorded with what was appropriate to the particular circumstances, when we first heard the buddha's dharma, directly we had encountered it we believed it, accepted it, had thoughts about it, and based conclusions on it.' World-Honored One, from of old, day long and into the night I have been reproaching myself. But now that I have heard from the Buddha what I had never heard before, a dharma that has never been before, I have cut off my doubts and second thoughts; my body and mind are at ease, and happily I have gained peace. This day, at long last, I know that I am truly the buddha's son, born of the buddha's mouth, born of dharma transformation. I have gained a portion of the buddha's dharma."¹

At that time Śāriputra, wishing to restate this meaning, proclaimed gāthās, saying:

Having heard this dharma sound, I
Have gained that which I never had before.
My heart harbors a great joy,
And the network of my doubt is completely cleared away.
From of old, having received the buddha's doctrine,
I have never lost the greater vehicle.²
The Buddha's voice is very rare,
Able to clear away the agonies of the beings.
Having already gained the extinction of the outflows,
Upon hearing this I also cleared away my cares and agonies.
Dwelling in mountains and valleys,
Or being at the foot of trees in forests,
Whether seated or walking about,
I constantly thought of these things.
“Ah!” said I in profound self-reproach,
“How can I have so deceived myself?
Though all sons of the buddha,
Entered alike into dharmas without outflows,
We shall not all be able in the future
To expound the unexcelled path.
The thirty-two [marks]^{*}—the gold color,
The ten strengths, and the various deliverances—
Are all together within one dharma;
Yet I have not gained these things.
The eighty kinds of the wondrously good,
The eighteen unshared dharmas,
And such excellences as these though there be,
Yet have I missed them all.
When I go about alone,
I see the Buddha present in the great multitude,
His name being bruited about in all ten directions,
Broadly benefiting the beings.
I think to myself that I have lost this advantage,

For I imagine I have been deceiving myself.
I constantly, day and night,
Think repeatedly about these things.
I wish to question the World-Honored One about them,
Whether I have missed them or not.
I constantly see the World-Honored One
Praising the bodhisattvas:
Thus day and night
Do I constantly weigh and measure matters such as these.
Now I hear the Buddha's voice
Preaching the dharma in accord with what is appropriate for the moment.
With what is free of outflows, hard to conceive or to discuss,
He causes the beings to reach the platform of the path.
Formerly I, attached to wrong views,
Was a teacher of Brahmans.
The World-Honored One, knowing my thoughts,
Uprooted the wrongs and preached nirvāṇa.
I, completely clearing away my wrong views,
Directly witnessed the empty dharmas.
At that time in my heart I said to myself
That I had contrived to reach the passage into extinction.
But now, at last, I am aware
That this is no real passage into extinction.³
When I contrive to become a buddha,
When I am fully endowed with the thirty-two marks,
When a multitude of gods, men, and yakṣas,
As well as dragons, spirits, and the like, do me honor,
At that time and not before shall I be able to say
That I am forever and completely extinguished without residue.⁴
The Buddha, in the midst of the great multitude,
Says that I shall become a buddha.
When I hear a dharma sound such as this,
My doubts and second thoughts are completely cleared away.
When first I heard the Buddha's preaching,
In my heart I was greatly alarmed:
“Surely Māra is playing Buddha,
Confusing my thoughts!”
The Buddha by resort to various means,
Parables, and cunning phrases preaches,
But his thought is as calm as the sea;

*See Edward Conze, ed., *The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom* (London: Luzac, 1961), 199–203, for a list of the thirty-two marks, and 147–48, for the eighteen unshared dharmas. Chapter 16 of the book is a good reference for this whole section.

When I hear him, my network of doubt is severed.⁵
The Buddha says that in ages gone by
Incalculable buddhas, now passed into extinction,
Dwelling securely in the midst of expedient devices,
Also preached this dharma, every one of them;
That the buddhas of the present and the future,
Their numbers past all reckoning,
Also, by resort to expedient devices,
Set forth a dharma such as this one,
Just as in the present the World-Honored One,
Beginning with his birth and going through his departure from
the household life,
His attainment of the path, and his turning of the dharma wheel,
Has also preached by resort to expedient devices.
The World-Honored One preaches the real path,
While Pāpiyāms [the "More Evil One," Māra] has none of this.
By this token I know for a certainty
That this is no Māra playing Buddha,
But that I, through having fallen into a net of doubt,
Thought this was the work of Māra.
When I hear the Buddha's gentle voice,
Profound, far removed from the ordinary understanding, and extremely
subtle,
Setting forth the pure dharma,
My heart is overjoyed,
My doubts and second thoughts are cleared away forever,
And I dwell securely in the midst of real knowledge [saying]:
"Of a certainty I shall become a buddha,
Revered by gods and men;
I shall turn the unexcelled dharma wheel,
Teaching and converting bodhisattvas."

At that time, the Buddha declared to Śāriputra: "I now speak in the midst of the great multitude of gods, men, śramaṇas, Brahmans, and the like. Formerly I, in the presence of two myriads of millions of buddhas, for the sake of the unexcelled path was constantly teaching and converting you. And you, throughout the long night of time, following me, received my instruction. It is because I led you hither by resort to expedient devices that you have been born into my dharma. Śāriputra, long ago I taught you to aspire to the buddha path. You have completely forgotten.

Accordingly, you say to yourself that you have already gained passage into extinction. Now once again, wishing to cause you to recall the path you trod in keeping with your former vow, for the voice hearers' sakes I preach this scripture of the greater vehicle, named the *Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, a dharma preached to bodhisattvas, one which the Buddha keeps in mind.

"Śāriputra, you, in an age to come, beyond incalculable, limitless, inconceivable kalpas, having made offerings to several thousands of myriads of millions of buddhas, having upheld the true dharma and having acquired to perfection the path trodden by bodhisattvas, shall be able to become a buddha named Flower Glow (Padmaprabha), a Thus Come One, Worthy of Offerings, of Right and Universal Knowledge, Your Clarity and Conduct Perfect, Well Gone, Understanding the World, an Unexcelled Worthy, a Regulator of Men of Stature, a Teacher of Gods and Men, a Buddha, a World-Honored One.

"That buddha's realm shall be named Free of Defilements (Viraja). Its land shall be flat and even, clean, well-adorned, tranquil, rich, and abounding in gods and men. It shall have vaidūrya for soil in an eightfold network of highways, each bordered with cords of pure gold. At their sides shall be columns of seven-jeweled trees, constantly bearing blossoms and fruit.

"Flower Glow, the Thus Come One, shall furthermore by resort to the three vehicles teach and convert the beings. Śāriputra, though the time of that buddha's emergence shall not be an evil age, by reason of his former vow he shall preach the dharma of the three vehicles. His kalpa shall be named Adorned with Great Jewels (Mahāratnapratimandita). Why shall it be named Adorned with Great Jewels? Because in that realm bodhisattvas shall be taken for great jewels. Those bodhisattvas shall be incalculable, limitless, past reckoning and discussion, beyond the reach of number or parable, such that, except with the power of buddha knowledge, none shall be able to know them.

"When they are about to walk, jeweled blossoms shall spring up to receive their feet (*ratnapadmavikramīṇo bhaviṣyanti*). These bodhisattvas shall not have just launched their thoughts, but all shall have long since planted the roots of excellence, and shall cultivate brahman conduct purely, in the presence of incalculable hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of buddhas, being constantly the objects of the buddhas' praise, ever cultivating buddha knowledge, acquiring thoroughly great spiritual penetration, knowing well the gateways of all the dharmas, straightforward and honest, without deception, firm in intent and mindfulness. Such bodhisattvas as these shall fill that realm.⁶

“Śāriputra, the life span of the buddha Flower Glow shall be twelve minor kalpas (*dvādaśāntarakalpa āyuṣpramāṇam bhavisyati*), excluding the time during which he shall be a prince, having not yet become a buddha. The life span of the people of his realm shall be eight minor kalpas. Flower Glow, the Thus Come One, when twelve minor kalpas have passed, shall present a prophecy of anuttarasamyaksambodhi to the bodhisattva Hard Full (Dhṛtiparipūrṇa). I tell you bhikṣus that this bodhisattva Hard Full shall in turn become a buddha, who shall be called He Whose Feet Tread Securely on Blossoms (Padmaśabhadhikrāmin), a tathāgato ‘rhan samyaksaṃbuddhah. His buddha realm shall also be of the same sort.

“Śāriputra, after the passage into extinction of this buddha Flower Glow, his true dharma shall abide in the world for thirty-two minor kalpas, and his counterfeit dharma shall abide in the world also for thirty-two minor kalpas.”

At that time, the World-Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, proclaimed gāthās, saying:

Śāriputra, in an age to come
 You shall be venerated for your achievement of the universal wisdom
 of a buddha.
 Your name shall be called Flower Glow,
 And you shall save incalculable multitudes,
 Having made offerings to numberless buddhas;
 Having perfected bodhisattva conduct,
 The ten strengths, and other such meritorious qualities;
 And having borne direct witness to the unexcelled path.
 When incalculable kalpas have passed,
 The kalpa shall be named Adorned with Great Jewels.
 The world shall be named Free of Defilement,
 Being pure and without blemish,
 Having vaidūrya for its soil,
 Setting off its highways with golden cords,
 Its particolored trees of seven jewels
 Constantly blooming and bearing fruit.
 The bodhisattvas of that realm
 Shall be ever firm of intent and mindfulness,
 Their supernatural penetrations and pāramitās
 All having been thoroughly perfected,
 And they themselves, in the presence of numberless buddhas, having
 Learned well the bodhisattva path.
 Great worthies such as these

Shall have been converted by the buddha Flower Glow.
 When a prince, the buddha,
 Forsaking his realm and setting aside his honors,
 In his final body
 Shall leave the household life and achieve the buddha path.
 The buddha Flower Glow shall abide in the world
 For a life span of twelve minor kalpas.
 The people of his realm
 Shall have a life span of eight minor kalpas.
 After the buddha shall have passed into extinction,
 His true dharma shall abide in the world
 For thirty-two minor kalpas,
 Broadly saving the living beings.
 When his true dharma is completely extinct,
 There shall be a counterfeit dharma for thirty-two minor kalpas.
 His śarīra shall be spread far and wide,
 And gods and men everywhere shall make offerings to it.
 What the buddha Flower Glow shall do
 Shall all be as I have said.
 That one sainted and venerable among two-legged beings
 Shall be most distinguished, without his like.
 He shall be none other than you yourself.
 You should and ought to be delighted.

At that time the fourfold multitude, bhikṣus, bhikṣunīs, upāsakas, and upāsikās, as well as a great multitude of gods, dragons, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, mahoragas, and the like, seeing Śāriputra receive in the Buddha’s presence a prophecy of anuttarasamyaksambodhi, danced endlessly for joy of heart and, each removing the uppermost garment he was wearing, presented it to the Buddha as an offering. Śakro Devānām Indrah and Brahmā, the king of the gods, together with numberless sons of gods, also made offerings to the Buddha of their fine divine garments and of divine māndārava and mahāmāndārava flowers. The divine garments they had scattered remained stationary in the open air, then turned about by themselves. Divine musicians all together at once made music of a hundred thousand myriads of kinds in the open air and, raining down many divine flowers, spoke these words: “The Buddha in former times in Vārāṇasī first turned the dharma wheel. Now, at long last, he is again turning the unexcelled and supremely great dharma wheel.” At that time the sons of gods, wishing to restate this meaning, proclaimed gāthās, saying:

Formerly, in Vārāṇasī,
 You turned the dharma wheel of the four truths,
 With discrimination preaching the dharmas,
 The origination and extinction of their five collections (*skandhānām
 udayam vyayam*).

Now again you are turning the most subtle,
 Unexcelled great dharma wheel.
 This dharma is profound and recondite,
 For few there are who can believe in it.
 From of old we
 Have often heard the World-Honored One preach,
 But have never before heard such
 A profound and subtle superior dharma.
 When the World-Honored One preaches this dharma,
 We are all delighted accordingly.

The greatly wise Śāriputra
 Has now been able to receive an august prediction.
 We also in this way
 Shall certainly be able to become buddhas,
 In all the worlds
 Most venerable and having none superior.
 The buddha path, beyond reckoning and discussion,
 We shall preach by resort to expedient devices and in accord with what
 is peculiarly appropriate.
 What meritorious deeds are ours,
 Whether in the present age or in ages gone by,
 As well as the merit of having seen buddhas,
 We divert completely to the buddha path.

At that time, Śāriputra addressed the Buddha, saying: "World-Honored One! I now have no more doubts or second thoughts, since I have been personally enabled to receive in the Buddha's presence a prophecy of anuttarasamyaksambodhi. These twelve hundred who freely control their own thoughts (*imāni bhagavan dvādaśa vaśibhūta śatāni*) formerly dwelt on the level of learners. The Buddha constantly taught them, saying, 'My dharma can separate one from birth, old age, sickness, and death, making possible the complete achievement of nirvāṇa.' These persons, the learners and those who had nothing more to learn, also thought, on the grounds that they had separated themselves from the view of 'I' and from the view of 'there is' and 'there is not,' that they had attained nirvāṇa. Yet now, in

the presence of the World-Honored One having heard what they had never heard before, they have fallen into doubt and uncertainty. Very well, O World-Honored One! I beg you, for the sake of the fourfold multitude, to explain the causes and conditions, thus separating them from their doubts and second thoughts."

At that time the Buddha declared to Śāriputra: "Did I not say formerly that the buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, by resort to a variety of [explanations of] causes and conditions, parables, words and phrases, and expedient devices preach the dharma; that all is for the purpose of anuttarasamyaksambodhi? This is because these preachings are all effected in order to convert bodhisattvas. However, Śāriputra, I shall now once again by resort to a parable clarify this meaning. For they who have intelligence gain understanding through parables.

"Śāriputra, imagine that a country, or a city state, or a municipality has a man of great power, advanced in years and of incalculable wealth, owning many fields and houses, as well as servants. His house is broad and great; it has only one doorway, but great multitudes of human beings, a hundred, or two hundred, or even five hundred, are dwelling in it. The halls are rotting, the walls crumbling, the pillars decayed at their base, the beams and ridgepoles precariously tipped. Throughout the house and all at the same time, quite suddenly a fire breaks out, burning down all the apartments. The great man's sons, ten, or twenty, or thirty of them, are still in the house.⁷

"The great man, directly he sees this great fire breaking out from four directions, is alarmed and terrified. He then has this thought: 'Though I was able to get out safely through this burning doorway, yet my sons within the burning house, attached as they are to their games, are unaware, ignorant, unperturbed, unafraid. The fire is coming to press in upon them, the pain will cut them to the quick. Yet at heart they are not horrified, nor have they any wish to leave.'

"Śāriputra, this great man has the following thought: 'I am a man of great physical strength. I might, in the folds of my robe or on top of a table, take them out of the house.' He thinks: 'This house has only one doorway, which, furthermore, is narrow and small. The children are young and, as yet having no understanding, are in love with their playthings. They may fall victim to the fire and be burned. I must explain the terror of it to them. This house is already on fire. They must make haste and get out in time. I must not let this fire burn them to death.' When he has had these thoughts, then in accord with his decision he says explicitly to the children, 'Get out quickly, all of you!' Though the father, in his compassion, urges them with explicit words, yet the children, attached as they are to their games, will

not deign to believe him or to accept what he says. Unalarmed and unafraid, they have not the least intention of leaving. For they do not even know what a 'fire' is, or what a 'house' is, or what it means to 'lose' anything. All they do is run back and forth, looking at their father.

"At that time, the great man has this thought: 'This house is already aflame with a great fire. If we do not get out in time, the children and I shall certainly be burned. I will now devise an expedient, whereby I shall enable the children to escape this disaster.' The father knows the children's preconceptions, whereby each child has his preferences, his feelings being specifically attached to his several precious toys and unusual playthings.⁸

"Accordingly, [the father] proclaims to them: 'The things you so love to play with are rare and hard to get. If you do not get them, you are certain to regret it later. Things like these, a variety of goat-drawn carriages, deer-drawn carriages, and ox-drawn carriages, are now outside the door for you to play with. Come out of this burning house quickly, all of you! I will give all of you what you desire.' The children hear what their father says. Since rare playthings are exactly what they desire, the heart of each is emboldened. Shoving one another aside in a mad race, all together in a rush they leave the burning house.

"At this time, the great man, seeing that his children have contrived to get out safely, and that all are seated in an open space at a crossroads, is no longer troubled. Secure at heart, he dances for joy. Then the children all address their father, saying: 'Father, the things you promised us a while ago—the lovely playthings, the goat-drawn carriages, deer-drawn carriages, and ox-drawn carriages—give us now, if you please.'

"Śāriputra, at that time the great man gives to each child one great carriage. The carriage is high and wide, adorned with a multitude of jewels, surrounded by posts and handrails, little bells suspended on all four sides. Also, on its top are spread out parasols and canopies. Further, it is adorned with an assortment of rare and precious jewels. Intertwined with jeweled cords and hung with flowered tassels, having heaps of carpets decorated with strips of cloth, as well as vermillion-colored cushions, it is yoked to a white ox, whose skin is pure white, whose bodily form is lovely, whose muscular strength is great, whose tread is even and fleet like the wind. [This ox] also has many attendants serving and guarding it.⁹ What is the reason? Because this great man, of wealth incalculable, his various storehouses all full to overflowing, has this thought: 'My wealth being limitless, I may not give small, inferior carriages to my children. Now these little boys are all my sons. I love them without distinction. I have carriages such as these, made of the seven jewels, in incalculable numbers. I must give

one to each of them with undiscriminating thought. I may not make distinctions. What is the reason? I take these things and distribute them to the whole realm, not stinting even then. How much the more should I do so to my own children!' At this time, the children, each mounting his great carriage, gain something they have never had before, something they have never hoped for. Śāriputra, what do you think? When this great man gives equally to all his children great carriages adorned with precious jewels, is he guilty of falsehood or not?"

Śāriputra said: "No, World-Honored One! This great man has but enabled his children to escape the calamity of fire, thus preserving their bodily lives. He is guilty of no falsehood. Why? Because the preservation whole of their bodily lives means that they have already received a lovely plaything. For what reason is that? All the [other] playthings, O Blessed One, were taken in exchange for their very lives. How much the more so when, by resort to an expedient device, he has rescued them from that burning house! World-Honored One! Had this great man given them not one tiny carriage, he would still be no liar. Why? Because this great man first thought: 'By resort to an expedient device I will enable the children to get out.' For this reason he is guilty of no falsehood. How much the more is this true when the great man, knowing that his wealth is incalculable and wishing to confer advantage on his children, gives to all equally a great carriage!"

The Buddha proclaimed to Śāriputra: "Good! Good! It is as you say! Śāriputra, the Thus Come One is also like this. That is, he is the father of all the worlds. To fear, terror, debilitation, anguish, care, worry, ignorance, and obscurity he puts an absolute end. Also, completely achieving the might of incalculable knowledge and insight, as well as fearlessness; having great spiritual power and the power of wisdom; perfecting the pāramitās of practical expedients and of wisdom, as well as of great good will and great compassion; constantly unflagging; and constantly seeking the good, he benefits all. Thus he creates the old and rotten burning house of the three worlds and, in order to save the beings from the fires of birth, old age, sickness, death, worry, grief, woe, agony, folly, delusion, blindness, obscurity, and the three poisons,* he teaches and converts them, enabling them to attain anuttarasamyaksambodhi. He sees that the beings are scorched by birth, old age, sickness, death, care, grief, woe, and anguish. They also, thanks to a fivefold desire for wealth, suffer a variety of woes.

*The "three poisons" are the three defilements of lust (*rāga*), sc. for the unwholesome; hatred (*dveṣa*), sc. for the wholesome; and delusion (*moha*), i.e., mistaking the one for the other.

Also, since they adhere greedily [to their views] and seek persistently [what they desire], they currently suffer many woes, and shall hereafter suffer the woes of hell, beasts, and hungry ghosts or, if they are born above the heavens or in the midst of men, suffer woe in the straits of destitution, or the woe of separation from what they love, or the woe of union with what they hate. It is in the midst of such various woes as these that the beings are plunged, yet they cavort in joy, unaware, unknowing, unalarmed, unafraid, neither experiencing disgust nor seeking release. In this burning house of the three worlds they run about hither and yon, and, though they encounter great woes, they are not concerned.¹⁰

“Śāriputra, having seen this, the Buddha then thinks: ‘I am the father of the beings; I must rescue them from their woes and troubles and give them the joy of incalculable and limitless buddha wisdom, thus causing them to frolic.’

“Śāriputra, the Thus Come One also has this thought: ‘If merely by resort to my spiritual power and the power of my knowledge (*jñānabalo smīti kṛtvā rddhibalo smīti kṛtvā*), and casting aside expedient devices, for the beings’ sake I praise the Thus Come One’s power of knowledge and insight and his fearlessness, the beings cannot thereby attain salvation. What is the reason? These beings, who have not yet escaped from birth, old age, sickness, death, care, grief, woe, and anguish, are being burned in the flaming house of the three worlds. How can they understand the buddha’s wisdom?’

“Śāriputra, just as that great man, though physically strong, did not use his strength, but, by resort to a gentle practical expedient, rescued his children from the troubles of the burning house, then gave each of them a great carriage adorned with precious jewels, just so does the Thus Come One in the same way, though he has various sorts of strength and fearlessness, refrain from using them, but merely, by resort to wisdom and practical expedients, rescue the beings from the burning house of the three worlds, preaching to them three vehicles—those of voice hearer, of pratyekabuddha, and of buddha—and saying to them: ‘You all are to have no desire to dwell in the burning house of the three worlds. Have no lust for coarse and broken-down visible matter, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles! If, clinging to them greedily, you display lust for them, then you shall be burned. Quick, get out of the three worlds! You shall get three vehicles, those of voice hearer, pratyekabuddha, and buddha. I now guarantee it, and I am never false. All you need do is strive earnestly with effort.’ By such devices as this the Thus Come One attracts and urges the beings. He also says: ‘You all are to know that the dharmas of these three vehicles are praised by the saints, [and they who mount them] are their own masters,

unbound, depending on nothing and seeking nothing. Mounted on these three vehicles, one gains for oneself the pleasure of faculties, strengths, intuitive perceptions, paths, dhyāna concentrations, deliverances, samādhis, and the like, all without outflows, then gets incalculable tranquil joys.¹¹

“Śāriputra, if there are beings who within are wise by nature; who, having heard the dharma from the World-Honored One, believe and accept it; who, earnestly striving and wishing to leave the three worlds, seek nirvāṇa for themselves; these are named [those who mount] the vehicle of the voice hearers. They are like those children who left the burning house in quest of goat-drawn carriages. If there are beings who, having heard the dharma from the World-Honored One, believe and accept it; who, earnestly striving and seeking the knowledge which is so of itself (*anācāryakam jñānam*), desire the quietude which is content with its own goodness (*damaśamatham akārikṣamāṇah*), and are deeply aware of the causes and conditions of the dharmas (*hetupratyayānubodhāya*), these are called [those who mount] the vehicle of the pratyekabuddhas. They are like those children who left the burning house in quest of deer-drawn carriages. If there are beings who, having heard the dharma from the World-Honored One, believe and accept it; who, vigorously practicing and striving, seek all-knowledge, buddha-knowledge, the knowledge which is so of itself, knowledge without a teacher, the knowledge and insight of the Thus Come One, his strengths, and his fearlessness; who, mercifully recalling and comforting incalculable living beings and benefiting gods and men, convey all to deliverance; these are named [those who mount] the great vehicle. It is because the bodhisattvas seek this vehicle that they are named mahāsattvas [great beings]. They are like those children who leave the burning house in quest of ox-drawn carriages. Śāriputra, just as that great man, seeing his children safely out of the burning house and in a place of safety, and thinking that he himself has wealth incalculable, presents his children equally with great carriages, just so in the same way does the Thus Come One, being the father of all living beings, when he sees incalculable thousands of millions of beings going through the gateway of the buddha’s doctrine off the painful, fearful, and precipitous pathway of the three worlds, there to gain the joy of nirvāṇa—just so, I say, does the Thus Come One at that time have this thought: ‘I have a treasure house of incalculable, limitless knowledge, strengths, various sorts of fearlessness, other such buddha-dharmas. These living beings are all my children.’ Then he gives the great vehicle equally to all, not allowing any of them to gain passage into extinction for himself alone, but conveying them all to the extinction of

the Thus Come One. To all these living beings who have escaped the three worlds he gives the buddhas' dhyāna concentration, their deliverances, and other devices of enjoyment, all of one appearance, of one kind, all praised by the saints (*sarvānyetānyekavarṇāni*), all able to bring about the prime, pure, and subtle joy (*āryāṇi paramasukhāni kriḍanakāni ramanīyakāni*). Śāriputra, just as that great man, first having enticed his children with three carriages and then having given them only one great carriage, adorned with jewels and supremely comfortable, is yet not guilty of falsehood, just so in the same way is the Thus Come One free of falsehood, though he first preached the three vehicles in order to entice the beings, then conveyed them to deliverance by resort to only the one great vehicle. Why? Because the Thus Come One, having a treasure house of incalculable wisdom, strengths, various sorts of fearlessness, and other dharmas, is able to give the dharma of the great vehicle to all living beings; but they are not all able to accept it. Śāriputra, for these reasons be it known that the buddhas, by resort to the power of expedient devices, divide the one buddha vehicle and speak of three."

The Buddha, wishing to restate this meaning, proclaimed gāthās, saying:

Suppose that, for example, a great man
Had a great house.
The house, since it was old,
Was in a state of collapse:
The halls were lofty and precarious,
The bases of the pillars crumbling and rotten,
The beams and ridgepoles aslant,
The stairways and landings disintegrating,
The walls and partitions cracked,
The clay and paint peeling off,
The thatch worn thin and in disarray,
The rafters and eavepoles coming loose,
Totally misshapen
And full of assorted filth.
There were five hundred persons
Dwelling within.
Kites, owls, and eagles;
Crows, magpies, pigeons, and doves;
Newts, snakes, vipers, and gribbles;
Centipedes and millipedes;

Lizards and myriopods;
Weasels, badgers, and mice,
And other malignant beings
Milled back and forth in a crisscross.
Places stinking of feces and urine
Overflowed with their filth,
With mayflies and other insects
Clustered on them.
Foxes, wolves, and *yegan**
Gnawed at, trampled on,
And chewed up corpses,
Leaving the bones and flesh a mess.
Thereupon bands of dogs,
Racing to the spot, seized them,
Hungry, weak, and terrified,
Seeking food here and there,
In their struggle snatching and pulling one another,
Snarling, gnashing their teeth, and howling.
That house's terrors
And strange sights were of this kind.
Here and there and all about
Were ghosts and demons,
Yakṣas and evil spirits,
Eating human flesh;
Varieties of poisonous insects
And other malignant birds and beasts
Hatched from eggs,
All defending themselves against one another.
The yakṣas would race to the spot,
Vying with one another to seize and eat them.
When they had eaten their fill,
Their wicked thoughts would be all the more intense.
The sound of their quarrels
Was terrifying.
The *kumbhāṇḍa* demons†
Would squat on high ground,

**Yegan*: a blind, emaciated tree dweller somewhat resembling a fox.

†*Kumbhāṇḍa*: a kind of demon having testicles the shape of water jars.

Or at times would rise above the earth
 A foot or two,
 Then would wander back and forth,
 Amusing themselves according to their own fancy,
 Seizing two legs of a dog,
 Or beating it so that it lost its bark,
 Or trampling on its neck,
 Terrifying the dog for their own amusement.
 Again, there were demons
 Tall of body,
 Naked, dark, and emaciated,
 Constantly dwelling there,
 Emitting loud and baneful sounds,
 Howling in their quest for food.
 Again, there were demons
 Whose throats were the shape of needles.
 Again, there were demons
 Whose heads were the shape of ox heads,
 Who would now eat human flesh,
 And would then devour dogs,
 The hair of their heads in a tousle,
 Harmful, malignant, and dangerous,
 Hard pressed by hunger and thirst,
 Howling as they ran back and forth.
 The yakṣas and hungry demons,
 The malignant birds and beasts,
 Facing all four ways in their acute hunger,
 Would peer through windows.
 The likes of these were the troubles
 And terrors incalculable.
 This old and decayed house
 Belonged to one man.
 The man had gone a short distance from the house
 When, before he had been gone very long,
 In the rear apartments
 Suddenly a fire broke out,
 From all four sides at once
 Raging in flame.
 The ridgepoles and beams, the rafters and pillars,
 Shaking and cracking with a sound of explosion,

Broke asunder and fell,
 While the walls and partitions collapsed.
 The ghosts and demons
 Raised their voices in a scream.
 The eagles and other birds,
 As well as the kumbhāṇḍas,
 Milled about in a panic,
 Unable to get out.
 The malignant beasts and poisonous insects
 Hid in crevices;
 While the *piśāca* demons [a kind of ogre],
 Who also dwelt therein,
 Being of slight merit,
 When they were hard pressed by the fire,
 Wrought harm on one another,
 Drinking blood and devouring flesh.
 Since the bands of yeh-kan
 Were already dead,
 The great malignant beasts,
 Racing to the spot, devoured them.
 Stinking smoke, with its foul odor,
 Filled the place on all four sides.
 Centipedes and millipedes,
 As well as varieties of poisonous snakes,
 Being burned by the fire,
 Vied with one another to get out of their holes,
 And the kumbhāṇḍaka demons,
 Seizing them at will, devoured them.
 Also, the hungry demons,
 The tops of their heads aflame,
 And tormented by hunger, thirst, and heat,
 Ran about in agonized panic.
 In this way that house was
 Extremely frightening,
 With calamities, conflagrations,
 And many other troubles, hardly just the one.
 At that time the householder,
 Standing outside the door,
 Heard someone say,
 "Your children

A while ago, in play,
 Entered this house.
 Being little and knowing nothing,
 They are enjoying themselves and clinging to their amusements."
 Having heard this, the great man
 Entered the burning house in alarm,
 To save them
 From the catastrophe of burning.
 He uttered a warning to his children,
 Explaining the many calamities:
 "Malignant demons, poisonous insects,
 And conflagrations are rampant.
 A multitude of woes, in succession,
 Shall follow one another unceasingly.
 The poisonous snakes, the newts and vipers,
 As well as the yakṣas
 And kumbhāṇḍa demons
 The yegan, the foxes and dogs,
 The eagles, the kites, and the owls,
 And the varieties of centipedes,
 Beside themselves with hunger and thirst,
 Are most frightening.
 This is a woeful and troublesome place;
 How much the more so with a great fire!"¹²
 The children, knowing nothing,
 Though they heard their father's admonitions,
 Still, addicted as before to their pleasures,
 Amused themselves ceaselessly.
 At that time, the great man
 Had this thought:
 "The children, being this way,
 Make my cares even more acute.
 Now this house
 Has not one pleasant feature,
 Yet the children,
 Steeped in their games
 And not heeding my instructions,
 Will surely be injured by the fire."
 Then straightway, intentionally
 Devising some expedients,

He announced to the children:
 "I have various
 Precious playthings,
 Lovely carriages adorned with fine jewels,
 Goat-drawn carriages, deer-drawn carriages,
 And carriages drawn by great oxen,
 Now outside the door.
 Come out, all of you!
 For your sakes I
 Have made these carriages,
 Following the desire of your own thoughts.
 You may amuse yourselves with them."
 When the children heard him tell
 Of carriages such as these,
 Straightway, racing one another,
 They ran out at a gallop,
 Reaching an empty spot
 And getting away from woes and troubles.
 The great man, seeing his children
 Able to get out of the burning house
 And abiding at a crossroads,
 Sat on his lion throne
 And joyfully said to himself,
 "Now I am happy!
 These children
 Were very hard to bring into the world and raise.
 Foolish, and little, and knowing nothing,
 They entered a dangerous house,
 Where there were many poisonous insects,
 Frightful spirits,
 And raging flames of great fires
 Rising up together from all four sides.
 Yet these children
 Were addicted to their games.
 I have already saved them,
 Enabling them to escape trouble.
 It is for this reason, O men,
 That I am now happy."
 At that time the children,
 Knowing that their father was serenely seated,

All went before their father
 And addressed him, saying:
 "We beg you to give us
 The three kinds of jeweled chariots
 That you promised us a while ago, saying,
 'Children, come out!
 I will use three kinds of carriages
 To accord with your wishes.'
 Now is the right time.
 Please give them to us!"
 The great man, being very rich,
 And having treasure houses filled with
 Gold, silver, and vaidūrya,
 Giant clamshells and agate,
 From many precious objects
 Had several carriages made,
 Decked with ornaments,
 Surrounded with handrails and shielding,
 With little bells hanging from all four sides
 And golden cords intertwined;
 With pearl-studded netting
 Stretched out over the top,
 And gold-flowered tassels
 Dropping down here and there;
 With assorted ornaments in many colors
 Encircling them all around;
 With soft and fine silk and cotton
 Made into cushions;
 With superbly fine mats,
 Their value in the thousands of millions,
 Pure white and spotlessly clean,
 Covering them;
 With great white oxen,
 Fat, and in the prime of life, and endowed with great strength,
 Their physical form lovely,
 Yoked to the jeweled carriages;
 With many footmen, fore and aft,
 Attending them.
 These lovely carriages
 He gave equally to all the children.

The children at this time,
 Dancing for joy
 And mounting these jeweled carriages,
 Cavorted in all four directions,
 Playing and enjoying themselves,
 Completely at ease and feeling no encumbrances.
 I tell you, Śāriputra:
 I, too, am like this,
 Being the most venerable among many saints,
 The father of the world.
 All the living beings,
 All my children,
 Are profoundly addicted to worldly pleasure
 And have no wise thoughts.
 The three spheres, completely insecure,
 Are just like a house afire,
 Being full of many woes
 Most frightful,
 Constantly marked by birth, old age,
 Sickness, death, and care—
 Fires such as these,
 Raging without cease.
 The Thus Come One, having already left
 The burning house of the three spheres,
 Is quiet and unperturbed,
 Dwelling securely in forest and field.
 Now these three spheres
 Are all my possession.
 The living beings within them
 Are all my children.
 Yet, now these places
 Have many cares and troubles,
 From which I alone
 Can save them.
 Even though I teach and command,
 Yet they neither believe nor accept,
 But to their tainting desires
 Are so profoundly addicted that I,
 By resort to an expedient device,
 Preach the three vehicles to them,

Causing the beings

To know the woes of the three spheres
And demonstrating and setting forth
The supramundane way.

If these children

With fixed thought
Acquire fully the three wisdoms

And the six supernatural penetrations,
They shall include among them those who can be cause perceivers
And nonbacksliding bodhisattvas.

O, Śāriputra!

For the beings' sake, I,
By resort to this parable,
Preach the one buddha vehicle;

All of you, if you can
Believe and accept these words,
Shall without exception

Completely attain to the buddha path.¹³
This vehicle is fine,

Supremely pure,
In all the worlds
Having not its master.

It is a thing which they whom the buddha gladdens,

All living beings,
Should praise,

To which they should make offerings and do obeisance.
It is incalculable thousands of millions

Of strengths and deliverances,
Dhyāna concentrations and modes of knowledge,

And other dharmas of the buddhas.
If they can gain this kind of vehicle,

I enable those children
Night and day, for a number of kalpas,

Ever to amuse themselves,
With bodhisattvas

And the multitude of voice hearers
To mount this jeweled vehicle
And to arrive directly at the platform of the way.¹⁴

For these reasons,
Seek as you will in all ten directions:

There is no other vehicle,

Apart from the expedient devices of the buddhas.
I tell you, Śāriputra,

You men
Are all my children,

And I am your father.
For kalpa upon kalpa, you
Have been scorched by multitudinous woes,
And I have saved you all,
Causing you to leave the three spheres.

Although earlier I said
That you would pass into extinction,
This was to be a mere end to birth and death,

And no true extinction.

What you should now achieve
Is nothing other than buddha wisdom.

If there are bodhisattvas
In the midst of this multitude,
They can listen single-mindedly
To the buddhas' real dharma.

Even though the buddhas, the World-Honored Ones,
Resort to expedient devices,

The living beings whom they convert
Are all bodhisattvas.¹⁵

If there are persons of slight understanding (*bālabuddhayāh*),
Profoundly addicted to lust and desire,
For their sakes

I preach the truth of suffering,
And the beings rejoice at heart
That they have gained something they never had before.

The Buddha's preaching of the truth of suffering
Is reality without falsehood.

If there are beings
Who, not knowing the origin of woe,
Are profoundly addicted to the causes of woe,

Unable to cast them off even for a moment,
For their sakes,

By resort to an expedient device, I preach the path:
That the origin of all woes
Is desire; which is their basis.

If one extinguishes desire,
They have nothing on which to rest.
The extinction of woes
Is called the third truth.
For the sake of the truth of extinction
One cultivates the path.
Separation from the bonds of woe
Is called the attainment of deliverance.
As for these [ignorant] men, whereby
Do they attain deliverance?
It is the mere separation of self from falsehood
That is called "deliverance."
In fact, however, they have not yet attained
Total deliverance.
The Buddha says that these men
Are not yet truly extinguished,
For these men have not yet attained
The unexcelled path.
At heart I have no wish
To cause them to attain passage into extinction.
I am the dharma king,
With respect to the dharma acting completely at will.
To bring the gift of tranquility to the beings
Is why I have appeared in the world.¹⁶
You, Śāriputra!
As for this dharma seal of mine,
I wish to benefit the world,
And therefore I preach it.¹⁷
Wherever you go,
Do not propagate it recklessly.
If there is a listener
Who with due rejoicing receives it upon the crown of his head,
You are to know that that man
Is an *avivartika* ["not to be turned back"].
If there is one who believes and accepts
This scripture-dharma,
That man has already, in times gone by,
Seen buddhas of the past,
Differentially made offerings to them,
And also heard this dharma.

If among men there is one who can
Believe what you preach,
Then it means that he sees me
And also sees you
And the *bhikṣusamgha* [company of monks],
As well as the bodhisattvas.
This *Scripture of the Dharma Blossom*
Is preached for those of profound knowledge;
Those of shallow perception, if they hear it,
Shall go astray and not understand.
For all voice hearers
And *pratyekabuddhas*,
The content of this scripture
Is beyond the reach of their faculties.
You, Śāriputra,
Even you, where this scripture is concerned,
Gained entry through faith.
How much the more so the other voice hearers!
Those other voice hearers
By virtue of their belief in the buddha's word
Accept this scripture;
It does not fall within the range of their own knowledge.
Also, Śāriputra,
To the proud, arrogant, lazy, and indolent,
To those who reckon in terms of "I,"
Do not preach this scripture.
To the ordinary fellow of shallow perception,
Profoundly addicted to the five desires,
Hearing yet unable to understand,
Also do not preach.
If a man, not believing,
Maligns this scripture,
Then he cuts off all
Worldly buddha seeds.
Or, again, he may, with contorted face,
Harbor doubts and uncertainties.
You are now to hear me tell
Of that man's retribution for his sins:¹⁸
Whether the Buddha be in the world,
Or whether it be after his passage into extinction,

There shall be those who malign
 Such scriptures as this one
 And who, seeing that there are readers, and reciters,
 And copiers, and keepers of this scripture,
 Shall, in disparagement, depreciation, hatred, and envy of them,
 Harbor grudges against them.
 The retribution for these men's sins
 You are now to hear:
 These men, at life's end,
 Shall enter the Avici hell,
 Where they shall fulfill one kalpa.
 When the kalpa is ended, they shall be reborn there.
 In this way, spinning around
 Throughout kalpas unnumbered, [and then]
 From hell emerging,
 They shall fall into the rank of beasts.
 If they are dogs or vegan,
 Their forms shall be hairless and emaciated,
 Spotted and scabbed,
 Things from which men shrink.
 They shall also by men be
 Detested and despised,
 Ever suffering from hunger and thirst,
 Their flesh and bones dried out and decayed.
 While living, they are pricked by poisonous thistles;
 When dead, they are covered with tiles and stones.
 It is because they have cut off the buddha seed
 That they suffer these retributions for their sins.
 If they become camels,
 Or if they are born among asses,
 On their bodies they shall ever carry heavy loads
 And suffer the blows of rods and whips,
 Thinking only of water and grass
 And knowing nothing else.
 For maligning this scripture
 They shall suffer punishments such as these.
 If they are those who become vegan,
 They shall enter human settlements,
 Their bodies spotted and scabbed,
 Also missing one eye,

By the children
 Beaten,
 Suffering all manner of woe and pain,
 At times to the point of death.
 Having died in this form,
 They shall then be endowed with the bodies of monster serpents,
 Their forms long and huge,
 To the extent of five hundred yojanas,
 Deaf, stupid, and legless,
 Wriggling about on their bellies,
 By little insects
 Pecked at and eaten,
 Day and night suffering woe
 And enjoying no respite.
 For maligning this scripture
 They shall suffer punishments such as these.
 If they contrive to become humans,
 They shall be obscure and dull of faculties,
 Short, mean, bent over, and crippled,
 Blind, deaf, and hunched.
 If they have anything to say,
 Men shall neither believe nor accept it.
 The breath of their mouths ever stinking,
 They shall be possessed by ghosts,
 Poor and lowly,
 Doing men's bidding,
 Much plagued by headache and emaciation,
 Having nothing on which to rely.
 Though they may personally attach themselves to men,
 Men do not have them in their thoughts.
 If they gain something,
 Shortly afterward they shall leave it behind.¹⁹
 If they practice the way of medicine,
 Tending disease in accord with prescription,
 They shall but aggravate the illnesses of others,
 At times bringing them even to the point of death.²⁰
 If they themselves have diseases,
 No man shall be able to save them;
 Even if they take good medicine,
 The sickness shall be all the more acute.²¹

Or others may attack them,
 Snatching, pillaging, stealing, or robbing.²²
 Such are the sins
 Into whose misfortune they shall fall by their own willful acts.
 Sinners such as these
 Shall never see the buddha,
 The king of the many saints,
 Preaching the dharma, teaching, and converting.
 Sinners such as these
 Shall ever be born in places of trouble.
 Mad, deaf, and confused of thought,
 They shall never hear the dharma.
 For kalpas as numberless
 As Ganges' sands,
 Whenever born, they shall be deaf and dumb,
 Of defective faculties,
 Ever dwelling in hell
 As if amusing themselves in a pleasure garden
 Or being in other evil paths
 As if in their own homes.
 Camels, asses, pigs, and dogs—
 These shall be their companions. [?]
 For maligning this scripture
 They shall suffer punishments such as these.
 If they contrive to become human beings,
 They shall be deaf, blind, and dumb,
 Poor, destitute, and in general decrepit,
 Yet adorning themselves withal.
 Swollen with water or dried out and wizened,
 Scabs, boils,
 And ills like these
 They shall have for their dress.
 Their bodies a constant stench,
 Filthy and unclean,
 Profoundly addicted to the view of "I,"
 They shall magnify their anger.
 Their lust being acute,
 There shall be nothing to choose between them and birds or beasts.
 For maligning this scripture

They shall suffer punishments such as these.²³
 I say to you, Śāriputra,
 Of those who malign this scripture
 That, if I were to tell their punishments,
 Even if I should exhaust a kalpa, I should not finish them.
 For this reason
 I expressly tell you,
 [When you are] in the midst of ignorant men,
 Do not preach this scripture.
 If there are those of keen faculties,
 Of knowledge clear and bright,
 Of much learning and strong memory,
 Who seek the buddha path,
 For men like these,
 And only for them, may you preach.
 If a man, having formerly seen
 Hundreds of thousands of millions of buddhas,
 Has planted seeds of goodness,
 His profound thought being firm,
 For a man like this,
 And only for him, may you preach.
 If a man strives,
 Constantly cultivating thoughts of good will
 And not begrudging his own body or his own life,
 Then for him alone may you preach.
 If a man is deferential
 And has no other thoughts,
 Separating himself from common fools
 And dwelling alone in mountains and marshes,
 For men like him,
 And only for them, may you preach.
 Also, Śāriputra,
 If you see that there is a man
 Who rejects evil acquaintances
 And clings to good friends,
 For men like him,
 And only for them, may you preach.
 If you see a son of the buddha
 Keeping a discipline as pure

As a bright jewel
 And seeking the scriptures of the great vehicle,
 For men like him,
 And only for them, may you preach.
 If a man, having no anger,
 Is honest and gentle,
 Ever pitying all
 And venerating the buddhas,
 For men like him,
 And only for them, may you preach.
 Again, there may be a son of the buddha
 In the midst of the great multitude
 Who, with pure thought
 And by resort to various means,
 Parables, and phrases,
 Preaches the dharma, unobstructed.
 For men like him,
 And only for them, may you preach.
 If there is a bhikṣu
 Who for the sake of all-knowledge
 Seeks the dharma in all four directions,
 With joined palms receiving it on the crown of his head,
 Desiring merely to receive and keep
 The scriptures of the great vehicle,
 Not accepting so much
 As a single gāthā from the other scriptures,
 For men like him,
 And only for them, may you preach.
 As a man wholeheartedly
 Seeks the buddhaśarīra,
 So may one seek the scriptures
 And, having found them, receive them on the crown of one's head.
 Such a person shall never again
 Wish to seek other scriptures,
 Nor has he ever before thought
 Of the books of the unbelievers.
 For men like him,
 And only for them, may you preach.
 I say to you, Śāriputra,
 That I, in telling of this sort

Of seekers of the buddha path,
 Could spend a whole kalpa and still not finish.
 If they are men of this sort,
 Then they can believe and understand,
 And for their sakes you may
 Preach the *Scripture of the Fine Dharma Flower.*²⁴

DEVADATTA

AT THAT time, the Buddha declared to the bodhisattvas and to the fourfold assembly of gods and men: "In time past, throughout incalculable kalpas I sought the *Scripture of the Dharma Blossom*, throughout many kalpas being neither negligent nor impatient. I was ever king of a realm, [and as king] I vowed to seek unexcelled bodhi, my thought never receding. Wishing to fulfill the six paramitas I strove to confer gifts, in my mind never begrudging elephants, horses, or the seven jewels; nor realms or walled cities; nor wife and children, slaves and servants; nor head eyes marrow, trunk and flesh arms and legs; not begrudging bodily life itself. At that time, the people of the age had incalculable length of life. For dharma's sake, I abandoned realm and title, leaving the government to my heir, and to the beat of a drum I announced to the four quarters that I was seeking dharma: 'Whoever can preach the great vehicle to me, for him I will render service and run errands for the rest of my life!' At that time there was a seer (*r̥si*) who came and reported to the king, saying, 'I have a great vehicle; its name is the *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*. If you can obey me, I will set it forth for you.' When the king heard the seer's words, he danced for joy, then straightway followed the seer, tending to whatever he required: picking his fruit, drawing his water, gathering his firewood, preparing his food, even making a couch of his own body; feeling no impatience, whether in body or in mind. He rendered him service for a thousand years, bending all efforts to menial labor for dharma's sake and seeing to it that he lacked nothing."¹

At that time, the World-Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, proclaimed gāthās, saying:

I recall past kalpas,
When, in quest of great dharma,
Though I was lord of the realm for the age,

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I did not crave the pleasures of the five desires.
 I beat a drum, declaring to the four quarters:
 "Whosoever is in possession of the great dharma,
 If he can explain it to me,
 In person I will be his slave!"
 At the time there was an ṛṣi seer,
 Who came and reported to the great king,
 "I have a fine and subtle dharma,
 Rarely to be had in the world.
 If you can practice it,
 Then I will preach it to you."
 At the time the king, hearing the seer's words,
 At heart was overjoyed.
 Then straightway, following the seer,
 He rendered him whatever service he required,
 Gathering his firewood, his fruits and melons,
 Presenting them to him respectfully at the appropriate times.
 Because my heart cherished the fine dharma,
 My body and mind knew neither sloth nor impatience.
 For the living beings' sakes, universally,
 I strove in quest of great dharma,
 Neither for myself
 Nor for the pleasures of the five desires.
 Thus I became the lord of a great realm,
 Strove to gain and keep this dharma,
 Contrived at length to achieve buddhahood,
 And now expressly preach to you.²

The Buddha declared to the bhikṣus: "The king at that time was myself. The seer was he who is at present Devadatta.³ It is thanks to my good friend Devadatta that I have been enabled to perfect the six pāramitās; tenderness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and indifference to self; the thirty-two marks and the eighty beautiful features; the color of polished red-gold; the ten strengths; the four kinds of fearlessness; the four inclusive dharmas; the eighteen kinds of uniqueness; the power of the way of the supernatural penetrations. The achievement of undifferentiating, right, enlightened intuition and the broad conveyance of living beings to salvation I owe to my good friend Devadatta. I declare this to the fourfold assembly: hereafter Devadatta, following the passage of incalculable kalpas, shall contrive to achieve buddhahood, and shall be called God King (Devarāja) the Thus

Come One, Worthy of Offerings, of Right and Universal Knowledge, His Clarity and Conduct Perfect, Well Gone, Understanding the World, an Unexcelled Worthy, a Regulator of Men of Stature, a Teacher of Gods and Men, a Buddha, a World-Honored One; and his world sphere shall be named Highway of the Gods [Devasopānā, "Stairway of the Gods"]. At that time, the buddha God King shall dwell in the world twenty intermediate kalpas, broadly preaching the fine dharma to the living beings. Beings equal in number to Ganges' sands shall gain the fruit of the arhant. Incalculable living beings shall display the mind of the perceiver of conditions. Beings equal in number to Ganges' sands shall open up their thought to the unexcelled way and, gaining acceptance of [the doctrine of] the unborn, dwell where there is no backsliding. At that time, after the parinirvāna of the buddha God King, his true dharma shall abide in the world twenty intermediate kalpas; and a stūpa of the seven jewels shall be erected to house the śarīra of his whole body, sixty yojanas in height, forty yojanas in length and breadth. Gods and men with assorted flowers, powdered incense, burned incense, perfumed paint, clothing and necklaces, banners and parasols, and music skillfully sung and played shall all make offerings to that fine stūpa of the seven jewels. Incalculable living beings shall gain the fruit of the arhant. Numberless beings shall have the enlightened intuition of the pratyekabuddha. Living beings whose number shall be beyond reckoning and discussion shall open up their thoughts to bodhi and reach the point from which there is no backsliding."

The Buddha declared to the bhikṣus: "In ages yet to come, if there is a good man or a good woman who, hearing the Devadatta chapter of the *Scripture of the Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, with a pure heart believes and reveres it, evincing no doubts or uncertainties, he shall not fall to the level of hell, hungry ghosts, or beasts, but shall be reborn in the presence of the buddhas of all ten directions, constantly hearing this scripture wherever he may be born. If he is reborn among men or gods, he shall enjoy superior subtle pleasures. If he is in the presence of a buddha, he shall be magically reborn in a lotus blossom."⁴

At that time, in the nether region there was a bodhisattva in the train of Many Jewels the World-Honored One whose name was Wisdom Accumulation (Prajñākūṭa). He reported to the buddha Many Jewels that he was about to return to his original land. Śākyamunibuddha addressed Wisdom Accumulation, saying, "Good man, wait a bit! There is here a bodhisattva named Mañjuśrī whom you would do well to meet, for he will preach the fine dharma to you, and then you may return to your original land."

At that time, Mañjuśrī was seated on a lotus blossom with a thousand

leaves, the size of a carriage wheel, and the bodhisattvas who had come with him were also seated on jeweled lotus blossoms, which were welling up of themselves out of the great sea, from the dragon palace of Sāgara, and resting in midair. Thence he went to the Mount of the Numinous Eagle (Gr̥dhrikūṭa), where, descending from the lotus blossom, he went into the Buddha's presence, with head bowed did obeisance before both feet of the World-Honored One, and, having attended to all courtesies, went before Wisdom Accumulation. There, having questioned him solicitously, he sat off to one side.⁵ The bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulation asked Mañjuśrī, "You have been to the dragon palace. How great is the number of the beings converted by you there?" Mañjuśrī said, "The number is beyond dimension, it is incalculable, not a thing the mouth can proclaim, nor anything the mind can fathom. Just wait a bit, for you shall have proof yourself." Before his speech was finished, numberless bodhisattvas, seated on jeweled lotus blossoms, welled up out of the sea and went to the Mount of the Numinous Eagle, where they rested in midair. These bodhisattvas had all been converted and conveyed to salvation by Mañjuśrī, all had perfected bodhisattva conduct, and all were discussing together the six pāramitās. Those who had formerly been voice hearers were in midair preaching the conduct of the voice hearer. But now all were putting into practice the great vehicle's doctrine of emptiness. Mañjuśrī spoke to Wisdom Accumulation, saying, "Such is the manner of teaching and conversion within the sea!"

At that time, the bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulation praised him with gāthās, saying:

O most excellently wise, most courageous and vigorous,
You have converted and conveyed to salvation an incalculable
multitude.
Now this great assembly
And I myself have all seen you
Setting forth the doctrine of the true marks,
Laying open the dharma of the one vehicle,
Broadly guiding multitudinous living beings,
And enabling them quickly to achieve bodhi.⁶

Mañjuśrī said, "I have never preached in the sea's midst anything but the *Scripture of the Blossom of the Fine Dharma*." The bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulation questioned Mañjuśrī, saying, "That scripture is very profound and subtle, a gem among the scriptures, a thing rarely to

be found in the world. Are there any beings who, putting this scripture into practice by the strenuous application of vigor, speedily gain buddhahood, or are there not?"

Mañjuśrī said, "There is the daughter of the dragon king Sāgara, whose years are barely eight. Her wisdom is sharp-rooted,* and well she knows the faculties and deeds of the beings. She has gained dhāraṇī. The profound treasure house of secrets preached by the buddhas she is able to accept and to keep in its entirety. She has profoundly entered into dhyāna concentration, and has arrived at an understanding of the dharmas. In the space of a *kṣana* [moment] she produced bodhi thought, and has attained the point of nonbacksliding. Her eloquence has no obstructions, and she is compassionately mindful of the beings as if they were her babies. Her merits are perfect.⁷ What she recollects in her mind and recites with her mouth is subtle and broad. She is of good will and compassionate, humane and yielding. Her will and thought are harmonious and refined, and she is able to attain to bodhi."

The bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulation said, "I have seen the Thus Come One of the Śākyas throughout incalculable kalpas tormenting himself by doing what is hard to do, piling up merit and heaping up excellence, seeking the path of the bodhisattva and never resting. When I look at the thousand-millionfold world, there is no place, not even the size of a mustard seed, where the bodhisattva did not cast away body and life for the beings' sakes, and only then did he achieve the way of bodhi. I do not believe that this girl in the space of a moment directly and immediately achieved right, enlightened intuition."

Before he had finished speaking, at that very time the daughter of the dragon king suddenly appeared in front [of them], and, doing obeisance with head bowed, stood off to one side and spoke praise with gāthās, saying:

Having profoundly mastered the marks of sin and merit,
Universally illuminating all ten directions,
The subtle and pure dharma body
Has perfected the marks thirty-two,
Using the eighty beautiful features

*That is, her capacity for intuitive understanding is supported by keen faculties (*ligen*, Skt. *tikṣṇendriya*). There are 32 *indriyas*, or faculties, among them the six sense faculties. The first five are fancied to be invisible, impalpable, weightless substances covering the respective sense organs, while the sixth, *mana'indriya*, is any sensual sensation of a moment (*kṣana*) before. The *indriyas* are the "base" of sense perception, and the Ch. accordingly renders the word as *gen*, "root."

As a means of adorning the dharma body.
 The object of respectful obeisance for gods and men,
 It is reverently honored by all dragons and spirits.
 Of all varieties of living beings,
 None fails to bow to it as an object of worship.
 I have also heard that, as for the achievement of bodhi,
 Only the Buddha can know it by direct witness.
 I, laying open the teachings of the great vehicle,
 Convey to release the suffering beings.⁸

At that time, Śāriputra spoke to the dragon girl, saying, "You say that in no long time you shall attain the unexcelled way. This is hard to believe. What is the reason? A woman's body is filthy, it is not a dharma receptacle. How can you attain unexcelled bodhi? The path of the buddha is remote and cavernous. Throughout incalculable kalpas, by tormenting oneself and accumulating good conduct, also by thoroughly cultivating the perfections, only by these means can one then be successful. Also, a woman's body even then has five obstacles. It cannot become first a Brahmā god king, second the god Śakra, third King Māra, fourth a sage-king turning the wheel, fifth a buddha body. How can the body of a woman speedily achieve buddhahood?"

At that time, the dragon girl had a precious gem, whose value was the [whole] thousand-millionfold world, which she held up and gave to the Buddha. The Buddha straightway accepted it. The dragon girl said to the bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulation and to the venerable Śāriputra, "I offered a precious gem, and the World-Honored One accepted it. Was this quick or not?"

He answered, saying, "Very quick!"

The girl said, "With your supernatural power you shall see me achieve buddhahood even more quickly than that!"

At that time, the assembled multitude all saw the dragon girl in the space of an instant turn into a man, perfect bodhisattva conduct, straightway go southward to the world sphere Spotless, sit on a jeweled lotus blossom, and achieve undifferentiating, right, enlightened intuition, with thirty-two marks and eighty beautiful features setting forth the fine dharma for all living beings in all ten directions. At that time, in the Sahā world sphere bodhisattvas, voice hearers, gods, dragons, the eightfold assembly, humans, and nonhumans, all from a distance seeing that dragon girl achieve buddhahood and universally preach dharma to the men and gods of the assembly of that time, were overjoyed at heart and all did obeisance from

afar. Incalculable living beings, hearing the dharma and understanding it, attained to nonbacksliding. Incalculable living beings were enabled to receive a prophecy of the path. The Spotless world sphere trembled in six different ways, and in the Sahā world sphere three thousand living beings dwelt on the ground from which there is no backsliding. Three thousand living beings opened up the thought of bodhi and were enabled to receive prophecies. The bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulation, as well as Śāriputra and all the assembled multitude, silently believed and accepted.⁹

- TIME
- UNDER
BODY

BUDDHA

bodies and, all the more humble and reverent, bending their bodies and bowing their heads, with palms joined they faced the Buddha and spoke together, saying, "As the Buddha commands, so will we worshipfully do. Very well, O World-Honored One, we beg you to have no concern!" In this way, three times did they speak together, saying, "As the Buddha commands, so will we worshipfully do. Very well, O World-Honored One, we beg you to have no concern!"³

At that time Śākyamunibuddha caused the buddhas who were emanations of his body and who had come from the ten quarters each to return to his original land, saying to them: "O buddhas! Let each of you follow what course is most comfortable for him. The stūpa of the buddha Many Jewels may again be as it was."

When he had spoken these words, in the ten quarters incalculable buddhas who were emanations of his body, seated on lion thrones at the foot of jeweled trees, and the buddha Many Jewels, as well as a great multitude consisting of Superior Conduct and limitless asaṃkhyeyas of bodhisattvas, the fourfold multitude of voice hearers consisting of Śāriputra and others, and the gods, men, and asuras in all the worlds, having heard what the Buddha had preached, were all overjoyed.⁴

[23]

THE FORMER AFFAIRS OF THE BODHISATTVA MEDICINE KING

AT THAT time, the bodhisattva Beflowered by the King of Constellations* (Nakṣatrarājasamkusumitābhijñā) addressed the Buddha, saying: "O World-Honored One! How does the bodhisattva Medicine King travel in the Sahā world? O World-Honored One! This bodhisattva Medicine King has to his credit several hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of nayutas of difficult deeds, of painful deeds. Very well, O World-Honored One, I beg you to explain a bit. For the gods, dragons, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, mahoragas, humans, and nonhumans, as well as the bodhisattvas come from other lands and this multitude of voice hearers, hearing, shall all rejoice."

At that time the Buddha declared to the bodhisattva Beflowered by the King of Constellations: "In time past, beyond kalpas as numerous as the sands of innumerable Ganges rivers, there was a buddha named Pure and Bright Excellence of Sun and Moon (Candrasūryavimalaprabhāśrī), a Thus Come One, Worthy of Offerings, of Right and Universal Knowledge, His Clarity and Conduct Perfect, Well Gone, Understanding the World, an Unexcelled Worthy, a Regulator of Men of Stature, a Teacher of Gods and Men, a Buddha, a World-Honored One. That buddha had eighty millions of great bodhisattva-mahāsattvas and a great multitude of voice hearers equal in number to the sands of seventy-two Ganges rivers. The buddha's life span was forty-two thousand kalpas, and the life span of his bodhisattvas was also the same. That realm had no women, hell dwellers, hungry ghosts, beasts, or asuras, or any troubles whatsoever. Its land was as flat as the palm of one's hand, made of vaiḍūrya, adorned with jeweled trees, hung with jeweled canopies, and draped with jeweled floral banners.

*Xiuwanghua. The Skt. form of the name means "one whose superknowledges have been beflowered by the kings of the constellations," which I take to signify one whose superhuman faculties have been blessed by lucky stars. The Ch. probably is a laconic way of saying the same thing.

Jeweled pots and censers ringed its borders, and its terraces were fashioned of the seven jewels. Trees alternated with terraces, the trees being removed from the terraces the distance of an arrow shot. All those jeweled trees had bodhisattvas and voice hearers sitting under them. The jeweled terraces each had atop them a hundred million gods making divine music and singing the praises of the buddha as an offering. At that time the buddha preached the *Scripture of the Dharma Blossom* to the bodhisattva Seen with Joy by All Living Beings (*Sarvasattvapriyadarśana*) and to the many bodhisattvas and multitude of voice hearers. This bodhisattva Seen with Joy by All Living Beings, desiring to cultivate painful practices, within the dharma of the buddha Pure and Bright Excellence of Sun and Moon went about persevering with vigor and single-mindedly seeking buddhahood for full twelve thousand years. He then obtained the *samādhi* that displays all manner of physical bodies.¹ After he had obtained this *samādhi*, he was overjoyed at heart. Straightway he had this thought, saying to himself, 'My ability to obtain the *samādhi* that displays all manner of physical bodies is entirely due to my having contrived to hear the *Scripture of the Dharma Blossom*. I will now make offerings to the buddha Pure and Bright Excellence of Sun and Moon and to the *Scripture of the Dharma Blossom*.' Straightway then he entered into this *samādhi*, and in open space there rained down māndārava and mahāmāndārava flowers, while a finely powdered, hard, black candana, filling all of space, descended like a cloud. There also rained down the scent of the candana of the near seashore,² six *shu** of this scent having the value of the Sahā world sphere, with which he made an offering to the buddha.

"After he had made this offering, he arose from *samādhi* and thought to himself, 'Though by resort to supernatural power I have made an offering to the buddha, it is not as if I had made an offering of my own body.' Straightway then he applied [to his body] various scents, candana, *kunduruka*, *turuṣka* [two kinds of frankincense], *prkkā* [trigonella], the scent that sinks in water, and the scent of pine tar;³ and he also drank the fragrant oils of campaka flowers. When a thousand two hundred years had been fulfilled, he painted his body with fragrant oil and, in the presence of the buddha Pure and Bright Excellence of Sun and Moon, wrapped his body in a garment adorned with divine jewels, anointed himself with fragrant oils, with the force of supernatural penetration took a vow,⁴ and then burned his own body. The glow gave light all around to world spheres equal in number to the sands of eighty millions of Ganges rivers. Within them

the buddhas all at once praised him, saying, 'Excellent! Excellent! Good man, this is true perseverance in vigor! This is called a true dharma offering to the Thus Come One. If with floral scent, necklaces, burned incense, powdered scent, paint scent, divine cloth, banners, parasols, the scent of the candana of the near seashore, and a variety of such things one were to make offerings, still they could not equal this former [act of yours]. Even if one were to give realm and walled cities, wife and children, they would still be no match for it. Good man, this is called the prime gift. Among the various gifts, it is the most honorable, the supreme. For it constitutes an offering of dharma to the Thus Come Ones.' When they had made this speech, each kept silence.

His body burned in the fire a thousand two hundred years. When this had passed, his body was then consumed. Because the Bodhisattva Seen with Joy by All Living Beings had made such a dharma offering as this, after his life had ended he was born again in the realm of the buddha Pure and Bright Excellence of Sun and Moon, where, in the household of King Pure Virtue (Vimaladatta), he was born suddenly, by transformation, sitting cross-legged. Straightway to his father he proclaimed a gāthā, saying:

O great king! Now be it known that

I, going about in that place,

Straightway attained the All-

- 1) Body-Displaying Samādhi,
- 2) Whereby, striving and greatly persevering in vigor,
- 3) I cast off the body to which I had been so attached.

"When he had proclaimed this gāthā, he addressed his father, saying, 'The buddha Pure and Bright Excellence of Sun and Moon is still present. Having formerly made offerings to that buddha, I have already contrived to understand the dhāraṇī of the speech of all living beings. I have also heard of this *Scripture of the Dharma Blossom* eight hundred thousands of myriads of millions of nayutas of *kaṅkara*, *vivara*, *akṣobhya*,* and the like, of gāthās. O great king! I will now go back and make offerings to that buddha.'⁶ When he had spoken, he straightway sat on a platform made of the seven jewels, and rose up into open space to a height of seven tala trees. He went into the buddha's presence, made obeisance to his feet with head bowed, joined his ten fingernails, and with a gāthā praised the buddha:

*I.e., one-fourth of a tael; the Skt. has one *karṣa*, about 176 grains Troy.

**Kaṅkara*, *vivara*, *akṣobhya*: each is an unspecified high number.

O most wondrous and fine of countenance,
Whose bright glow illuminates all ten quarters,
Formerly I have made offerings to you,
And now once again I come to behold you in person.

"At that time the bodhisattva Seen with Joy by All Living Beings, having proclaimed this gāthā, addressed the buddha, saying, 'World-Honored One, World-Honored One, you are still in the world!' At that time the buddha Pure and Bright Excellence of Sun and Moon declared to the bodhisattva Seen with Joy by All Living Beings, 'Good man, my time of nirvāna has come, my time of total extinction has arrived. You may lay out my couch and seat, for this night will I achieve parinirvāna.'

"Again, he commanded the bodhisattva Seen with Joy by All Living Beings: 'Good man, I entrust the buddha's dharma to you. Also, bodhisattvas and their great disciples, as well as the dharma of anuttarasamyak-saṃbodhi, also the seven-jeweled world spheres of the thousand-million-fold world, its jeweled trees and jeweled terraces, and the gods who wait upon it I entrust entirely to you. After my passage into extinction, whatever śarira there may be I entrust to you also. You are to spread them about and broadly arrange for offerings to them. You are to erect several thousand stūpas.' In this way the buddha Pure and Bright Excellence of Sun and Moon, having commanded the bodhisattva Seen with Joy by All Living Beings, in the last watch of the night entered nirvāna.

"At that time, the bodhisattva Seen with Joy by All Living Beings, seeing that the buddha had passed into extinction, was sore moved with grief and longing for the buddha. Straightway, using the candana of the near seashore for firewood and as an offering to the buddha's body, he then burned the latter. When the fire had gone out, he collected the śarira and, making eighty-four thousand jeweled pots, with it erected eighty-four thousand stūpas the height of three world spheres, displaying chatras as ornaments, draped with banners and parasols, and hung with a multitude of jeweled bells. At that time the bodhisattva Seen with Joy by All Living Beings again had a thought, saying to himself, "Though I have made this offering, at heart I am still not satisfied. I will now make still further offerings to the śarira." He then said to the bodhisattvas, their disciples, the gods, dragons, yakṣas, and the others, to all the great multitude, 'You are all to attend single-mindedly. For I will now make an offering to the śarira of the buddha Pure and Bright Excellence of Sun and Moon.' Having spoken these words, straightway, before the eighty-four thousand stūpas, he burned his forearm, adorned as it was with a hundred happy qualities, making this

his offering for seventy-two thousand years, thus causing a numberless multitude seeking the rank of voice hearers, incalculable asamkhyeyas of human beings, to open up their thought to anuttarasamyak-saṃbodhi, enabling them also to dwell in the samādhi that displays all manner of physical bodies. — *free from all afflictions*

"At that time the bodhisattvas, gods, men, asuras, and others, seeing that he was without an arm, grieved and mourned, then said: 'This bodhisattva Seen with Joy by All Living Beings is our master, the one who has taught and converted us. Yet, now he has burned his forearm, his body is lacking something.' At that time, the bodhisattva Seen with Joy by All Living Beings in the midst of the great multitude took this oath, saying, 'I have thrown away both arms. May I now without fail gain the buddha's gold-colored body! If this oath is reality and not vanity, then may both arms be restored as before!' When he had taken this oath, they were restored of themselves, an achievement due to the purity of this bodhisattva's merit and wisdom. At that time, the thousand-million-fold world trembled in six ways, the gods rained down jeweled flowers, and all men and gods gained something they had never had before."

The Buddha demanded of the bodhisattva Beflowered by the King of Constellations, "In your thinking, how is it? Can the bodhisattva Seen with Joy by All Living Beings possibly have been anyone else? He was none other than the present bodhisattva Medicine King! Gifts of his own body, such as this one, number in the incalculable hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of nayutas. O Beflowered by the King of Constellations! If there is one who, opening up his thought, wishes to attain anuttarasamyak-saṃbodhi, if he can burn a finger or even a toe as an offering to a buddha-stūpa, he shall exceed one who uses realm or walled city, wife or children, or even all the lands, mountains, forests, rivers, ponds, and sundry precious objects in the whole thousand-million-fold world as offerings. If again there is a man who offers a thousand-million-fold world full of the seven jewels to buddhas, great bodhisattvas, pratyekabuddhas, and arhants, the merit gained by him shall not match that of one who holds of this *Scripture of the Dharma Blossom* so much as a single four-foot gāthā, for the latter's merit shall be the greatest.⁸

"O Beflowered by the King of Constellations! Just as, for example, among all streams, rivers, and bodies of water the sea is first, this *Scripture of the Dharma Blossom*, also in the same way, is the deepest and greatest among the scriptures preached by the Thus Come One. Also, just as among Earth Mountain, Black Mountain, the lesser Mount Iron Rim, the greater Mount Iron Rim, the Mount of Ten Jewels, and the whole multitude of mountains

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Mount Sumeru is the first, this *Scripture of the Dharma Blossom*, also in the same way, is supreme among the scriptures.⁹ Further, just as among a multitude of stars the moon, child of the gods, is first, this *Scripture of the Dharma Blossom*, also in the same way, is the brightest among a thousand myriads of millions of kinds of scriptural dharmas. Further, just as the sun, child of the gods, can clear away all darkness, this scripture, also in the same way, can demolish the obscurities of all kinds of unwholesomeness. Further, just as among lesser kings the wheel-turning sage-king is first, this scripture also, in the same way, is the most honorable among a multitude of scriptures. Just as the divine Śakra is king among the thirty-three gods, this scripture, also in the same way, is king among scriptures. Further, just as the great god king Brahmā is father of all living beings, this scripture also, in the same way, is father of all saints and sages, of all learners and of those who having nothing more to learn, and of all who have launched bodhisattva thought. Further, just as among all ordinary fellows the srota'apanna, sakṛdāgāmin, anāgāmin, arhant, and pratyekabuddha are first, this scripture also, in the same way, is first and foremost among all scriptural dharmas, whether preached by the Thus Come One, or preached by bodhisattvas, or preached by voice hearers.¹⁰ If anyone can accept and hold this scriptural canon, he, too, in the same way, shall be first among all living beings. Among all voice hearers and pratyekabuddhas the bodhisattva is first, and this scripture too, in the same way, is first and foremost among all scriptural dharmas. Just as the Buddha is the king of the dharmas, this scripture is also, in the same way, the king of the scriptures.¹¹ O Beflowered by the King of Constellations! This scripture can save all living beings. This scripture can enable all living beings to separate themselves from pain and torment. This scripture can greatly benefit all living beings, fulfilling their desires. Like a clear, cool pond, it can slake the thirst of all. As a chilled person finds fire, as a naked person finds clothing, as a merchant finds a chief, as a child finds its mother, as a passenger finds a ship, as a sick person finds a physician, as darkness finds a torch, as a poor person finds a jewel, as the people find a king, as a commercial traveler finds the sea, as a candle dispels darkness, this *Scripture of the Dharma Blossom* also, in the same way, can enable the beings to separate themselves from all woes, from all sickness and pain, and can loose all the bonds of birth and death. If a man contrives to hear this *Scripture of the Dharma Blossom*, and if he writes it down himself, or causes another to write it, then no limit can be found to the merit he shall obtain, even if its quantity be measured with buddha wisdom. If, having written down this scriptural roll, he makes offerings with floral scent,

necklaces, burned incense, powdered incense, perfumed paint, banners and parasols, garments, and sundry torches, such as sesame torches, oil torches, torches of sundry fragrant oils, torches of campaka oil, torches of sumanā oil, torches of pāṭala [trumpet flower] oil, torches of vārṣika and torches of navamālikā oil [two varieties of Arabian jasmine], the merit he gains shall also be incalculable. O Beflowered by the King of Constellations! If a man hears this "Chapter of the Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King," he also shall gain incalculable, limitless merit. If a woman, hearing this "Chapter of the Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King," can accept and keep it, she shall put an end to her female body, and shall never again receive one. If after the extinction of the Thus Come One, within the last five hundred years, there is then a woman who, hearing this scriptural canon, practices it as preached, at the end of this life she shall straightway go to the world sphere Comfortable (Sukhāvati), to the dwelling place of the buddha Amitāyus, where he is surrounded by a multitude of great bodhisattvas, there to be reborn on a jeweled throne among lotus blossoms, never again to be tormented by greed, never again to be tormented by anger or folly, never again to be tormented by pride, envy, or other defilements.¹² But he shall gain the bodhisattva's supernatural penetrations, his acceptance of the principle of unborn dharmas. When he has attained this acceptance, the faculty of his eye shall be pure. With this pure ocular faculty he shall see buddhas, Thus Come Ones, equal in number to the sands of seven hundred myriad two thousand millions of nayutas of Ganges rivers. At that time the buddhas shall together praise him from afar, saying, 'Excellent! Excellent! Good man, you have been able, within the dharma of Śākyamunibuddha, to receive and hold, to read and recite, and to think on this scripture, as well as to preach it to others. The merit you have obtained is incalculable and limitless, such as fire cannot burn nor water carry off. Your merits are such that a thousand buddhas, speaking of them together, could not exhaust them. You have now already proved able to smash Māra's assorted rabble, to destroy the army of birth and death. The remaining enemies you have completely annihilated. Good man, a hundred thousand buddhas with their power of supernatural penetrations shall together protect you.¹³ Among the gods and men in all the worlds there is none like you, save only the Thus Come One. Among voice hearers and pratyekabuddhas, yes, and bodhisattvas too, for wisdom and dhyāna concentration there is none to equal you.' O Beflowered by the King of Constellations! Such was the force of merit and wisdom achieved by this bodhisattva!

"If there is a man who, hearing this "Chapter of the Former Affairs of

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the Bodhisattva Medicine King," can rejoice appropriately and praise it as good, this man in the present age shall ever exhale from his mouth the fragrance of pure lotus, from his pores the scent of ox-head candana; and the merits he obtains shall be as just stated. For this reason, O Beflowered by the King of Constellations, I entrust this "Chapter of the Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King" to you. After my passage into extinction, within the last five hundred years, broadly proclaim and propagate it in Jambudvīpa, never allowing it to be cut off, nor evil Māra's people, or gods, dragons, yakṣas, kumbhāṇḍas, and the like to get the better of it. O Beflowered by the King of Constellations! With the power of supernatural penetration, you are to protect this scripture. What is the reason? This scripture, for the people of Jambudvīpa, is a good physic for their sicknesses. If a man has an illness and can hear this scripture, the illness shall immediately vanish. He shall neither grow old nor die. O Beflowered by the King of Constellations! If you see that there is anyone who accepts and holds this scripture, then you must heap powdered incense in a green lotus blossom and scatter it on top of him as an offering, then, having scattered it, say to yourself, 'This man in no long time shall without fail take grass, sit on the platform of the way [after spreading the grass over its surface], and smash the armies of Māra. He shall blow the conch of the dharma, beat the drum of the dharma, and ferry all beings over the sea of birth, old age, sickness, and death.' For this reason, when one seeking the buddha path sees that there is a person who accepts and keeps this scriptural canon, he is to produce in this way a thought of humble reverence."¹⁴

When this "Chapter of the Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King" was preached, eighty-four thousand bodhisattvas attained the dhāraṇī enabling them to understand the speech of all living beings,¹⁵ and the Thus Come One Many Jewels within the jeweled stūpa praised the bodhisattva Beflowered by the King of Constellations, saying, "Excellent! Excellent, O Beflowered by the King of Constellations! It is because you have achieved merits beyond reckoning and discussion that you are able to question Śākyamunibuddha about such matters as these and to benefit the incalculable totality of living beings."¹⁶

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THE BODHISATTVA FINE SOUND

AT THAT time Śākyamunibuddha emitted a glow from the knot of flesh that was one mark of the great man, as well as a ray of light from the mark of the white tuft between his brows, universally illuminating buddha world spheres in the eastern quarter as numerous as the sands of a hundred and eight myriads of millions of nayutas of Ganges rivers. Beyond these there was a world sphere named Adorned with Pure Light (Vairocanaraśmipratimaṇḍitā). In that realm was a buddha named Knowledge [Conferred] by the King of Constellations [named] Pure Flower (Kamaladalavimalanakṣatrarājasaṃkusumitābhijña), a Thus Come One, Worthy of Offerings, of Right and Universal Knowledge, His Clarity and Conduct Perfect, Well Gone, Understanding the World, an Unexcelled Worthy, a Regulator of Men of Stature, a Teacher of Gods and Men, a Buddha, a World-Honored One,¹ surrounded in humble reverence by an incalculable, limitless multitude of bodhisattvas, to whom he preached the dharma. The glow of Śākyamunibuddha's white tuft universally illuminated that realm. At that time, within the realm Adorned with All Pure Light was a bodhisattva named Fine Sound (Gadgadasvara), who had long since planted the roots of a multitude of excellences, made offerings to and approached with familiarity incalculable hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of buddhas, achieving profound wisdom and attaining the samādhi of the Fine Standard (*dhvajāgrakeyūrasamādhibabdhaḥ*), the samādhi of the Dharma Blossom (*saddharmapuṇḍarīka*^o), the samādhi of Pure Excellence (*vimaladatta*^o), the samādhi of the Sport of the King of Constellations (*nakṣatrarājavikridita*^o), the samādhi of No Objects (*anilambha*^o), the samādhi of the Seal of Knowledge (*jñānamudrā*^o), the samādhi that Enables One to Understand the Speech of All Living Beings (*sarvarutakauśalya*^o), the samādhi that Collects All Merits (*sarvapuṇyasamuccaya*^o), the Pure samādhi (*prasādavati*^o), the samādhi of the Play of Magical Powers (*rddhivikrīdita*^o), the samādhi of