

CHAPTER XXV

The All-Sidedness of the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World

AT THAT TIME the Bodhisattva Infinite Thought rose up from his seat, and baring his right shoulder and folding his hands toward the Buddha, spoke thus: "World-honored One! For what reason is the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara named Regarder of the Cries of the World?"

The Buddha answered the Bodhisattva Infinite Thought: "Good son! If there be countless hundred thousand myriad koṭis of living beings suffering from pain and distress who hear of this Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World, and with all their mind call upon his name, the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World will instantly regard their cries, and all of them will be delivered.

"If there be any who keep the name of that Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World, though they fall into a great fire, the fire will not be able to burn them, by virtue of the supernatural power of that bodhisattva's majesty. If any, carried away by a flood, call upon his name, they will immediately reach the shallows. If there be hundreds of thousands of myriads of koṭis of beings who in search of gold, silver, lapis lazuli, moonstones, agate, coral, amber, pearls, and

other treasures go out on the ocean, and if a black gale¹ blows their ships to drift upon the land of the rākshasa demons, and if amongst them there be even a single person who calls upon the name of the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World, all those people will be delivered from the throes of the rākshasas. It is for this reason that [he] is named Regarder of the Cries of the World.

"If, again, there be any man on the verge of [deadly] harm who calls upon the name of the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World, the sword of the attacker will instantly snap asunder and he will be set free. Even if the three-thousand-great-thousandfold world were full of yakshas and rākshasas seeking to afflict people, these wicked demons, hearing them call upon the name of the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World, would not be able to see them with [their] wicked eyes, how much less to hurt them.

"If, moreover, there be anyone, guilty or not guilty, loaded with manacles, fetters, cangues, or chains, who calls on the name of the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World, they shall all be snapped and broken off and he shall be freed.

"If the three-thousand-great-thousandfold world were full of enemies and robbers, and there were a merchant chief who led many merchants having charge of costly jewels along a perilous road, and among them one man speaks forth: 'Good sons! Be not afraid. With one mind do you invoke the title of the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World, for this bodhisattva is able to give courage to all the living. If you invoke his name, you will be freed from these enemies and robbers.' On hearing this, if all the traders together with one voice cry, 'Namah! Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World!' then, by invoking his name, they will be relieved. Infinite Thought! Such is the awe-inspiring supernatural power of the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World.

"If any living beings much given to carnal passion keep in mind and revere the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World, they will be set free from their passion. If any much given to irascibility keep in mind and revere the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World, they will be set free from their irascibility. If any much given to infatuation keep in mind and revere the Bodhisattva Regarder of

1. Literally, "a black wind." There are six kinds of wind: black, red, blue, of heaven, of earth, and of fire.

the Cries of the World, they will be set free from their infatuation. Infinite Thought! Such are the abundant benefits conferred by the supernatural power of the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World. Consequently, let all the living ever keep him in mind.

"If any woman desiring a son worships and pays homage to the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World, she will bear a son happy, virtuous, and wise. If she desires a daughter, she will bear a daughter of good demeanor and looks, who of old has planted virtuous roots, beloved and respected by all. Infinite Thought! Such is the power of the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World. If any of the living revere and worship the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World, blessings will not be rudely rejected.

"Therefore, let all the living cherish the title of the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World. Infinite Thought! Suppose anyone cherishes the names of bodhisattvas [numerous as] the sands of sixty-two kotis of the Ganges, who all his life makes them offerings of food, drink, garments, bedding, and medicaments—what is your opinion—are not the merits of that good son or good daughter abundant?" Infinite Thought replied: "Extremely abundant!" The World-honored One, the Buddha, proceeded: "But if [any]one cherishes the title of the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World, or only for a moment worships and reveres him, the blessings of these two men will be exactly equal without difference, and cannot be exhausted in hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of kalpas. Infinite Thought! Such is the immeasurable, boundless degree of blessedness he will obtain who cherishes the name of the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World."

The Bodhisattva Infinite Thought [again] said to the Buddha: "World-honored One! How is it that the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World wanders in this sahā-world? How does he preach the Law to the living? What is the character of his tactfulness?"

The Buddha replied to the Bodhisattva Infinite Thought: "Good son! If the living in any realm must be saved in the body of a buddha, the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World appears as a buddha and preaches to them the Law. To those who must be saved in the body of a pratyekabuddha, he appears as a pratyekabuddha and preaches to them the Law. To those who must be saved in the body of a śravaka, he appears as a śravaka and preaches to them the Law. To

those who must be saved in the body of Brahma, he appears as Brahma and preaches to them the Law. To those who must be saved in the body of Śakra, he appears as Śakra and preaches to them the Law. To those who must be saved in the body of Īśvara, he appears as Īśvara and preaches to them the Law. To those who must be saved in the body of Maheśvara, he appears as Maheśvara and preaches to them the Law. To those who must be saved in the body of a great divine general, he appears as a great divine general and preaches to them the Law. To those who must be saved in the body of Vaiśravaṇa, he appears as Vaiśravaṇa and preaches to them the Law. To those who must be saved in the body of a minor king, he appears as a minor king and preaches to them the Law. To those who must be saved in the body of an elder, he appears as an elder and preaches to them the Law. To those who must be saved in the body of a citizen, he appears as a citizen and preaches to them the Law. To those who must be saved in the body of a minister of state, he appears as a minister and preaches to them the Law. To those who must be saved in the body of a Brahman, he appears as a Brahman and preaches to them the Law. To those who must be saved in the body of a bhikshu, bhikshuṇī, upāsaka, or upāsikā, he appears as a bhikshu, bhikshuṇī, upāsaka, or upāsikā and preaches to them the Law. To those who must be saved in the body of the wife of an elder, citizen, minister, or Brahman, he appears as a woman and preaches to them the Law. To those who must be saved in the body of a youth or maiden, he appears as a youth or maiden and preaches to them the Law. To those who must be saved in the body of a god, dragon, yaksha, gandharva, asura, garuḍa, kiṁnara, mahoraga, human or nonhuman being, he appears in every such form and preaches to them the Law. To those who must be saved in [the shape of] a diamond-holding god,² he appears as a diamond-holding god and preaches to them the Law. Infinite Thought! Such are the merits acquired by this Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World and the various forms in which he rambles through many lands to save the living. Therefore, do you with single mind pay homage to the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World. This Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva Regarder of the Cries of the World is able to make

2. The god who holds the *vajra*, or diamond club. Five hundred such gods guard a buddha, protecting him from all foes.

fearless those in anxiety and distress. For this reason all in this sahā-world give him the title Bestower of Fearlessness."

The Bodhisattva Infinite Thought said to the Buddha: "World-honored One! Let me now make an offering to the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World."

Thereupon he unloosed from his neck a necklace of pearls worth a hundred thousand pieces of gold and presented it to him, making this remark: "Good sir! Accept this pious gift of a pearl necklace." But the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World would not accept it.

Again the Bodhisattva Infinite Thought addressed the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World: "Good sir! Out of compassion for us, accept this necklace." Then the Buddha said to the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World: "Out of compassion for this Bodhisattva Infinite Thought and the four groups, and for the gods, dragons, yakshas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kiṁnaras, mahoragas, human and nonhuman beings, and others, accept this necklace." Then the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World, having compassion for all the four groups and the gods, dragons, human and nonhuman beings, and others, accepted the necklace, and dividing it into two parts, offered one part to Sakyamuni Buddha and offered the other to the stupa of the Buddha Abundant Treasures.

"Infinite Thought! With such sovereign supernatural powers does the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World wander through the sahā-world."

Then the Bodhisattva Infinite Thought made inquiry thus in verse:³

"The World-honored One with all the mystic signs!
Let me now again inquire of him:
For what cause is this Buddha-son named
Regarder of the Cries of the World?"

3. The following verses are not given by either Kumārajīva or Dharmaraksha. They are found in Kumārajīva's version as the interpolation of a later translator, Jñanagupta, who used a Sanskrit text written on palm leaves, while Kumārajīva had used a text written on silk from Khotan. The Nepalese text has the poetry section, but it differs widely from Jñanagupta's. Chih-i has no comment on the verses, indicating that the version of the sutra that he used did not contain them. This section may have been an independent song in praise of Avalokiteśvara that was later incorporated into the sutra.

The Honored One with all the mystic signs answered Infinite Thought in verse:

"Listen to the deeds of the Cry Regarder,
Who well responds to every quarter;
His vast vow is deep as the sea,
Inconceivable in its eons.
Serving many thousands of kotis of buddhas,
He has vowed a great pure vow.
Let me briefly tell you.
[He who] hears his name, and sees him,
And bears him unremittingly in mind,
Will be able to end the sorrows of existence.
Though [others] with harmful intent
Throw him into a burning pit,
Let him think of the Cry Regarder's power
And the fire pit will become a pool.
Or driven along a great ocean,
In peril of dragons, fishes, and demons,
Let him think of the Cry Regarder's power
And waves cannot submerge him.
Or if, from the peak of Sumeru,
Men would hurl him down,
Let him think of the Cry Regarder's power
And like the sun he will stand firm in the sky.
Or if, pursued by wicked men,
And cast down from Mount Diamond,⁴
He thinks of the Cry Regarder's power,
Not a hair shall be injured.
Or if, meeting with encompassing foes,
Each with sword drawn to strike him,
He thinks of the Cry Regarder's power,
All their hearts will turn to kindness.
Or if, meeting suffering by royal [command],
His life is to end in execution,

4. The same as Mount Iron Circle.

[And] he thinks of the Cry Regarder's power,
[The executioner's] sword will break in pieces.
Or if, imprisoned, shackled, and chained,
Arms and legs in gyves and stocks,
He thinks of the Cry Regarder's power,
Freely he shall be released.
Or if by incantation and poisons
One seeks to hurt his body,
And he thinks of the Cry Regarder's power,
All will revert to their originator.
Or if, meeting evil rākshasas,
Venomous dragons, and demons,
He thinks of the Cry Regarder's power,
At once none will dare to hurt him.
If, encompassed by evil beasts,
Tusks sharp and claws fearful,
He thinks of the Cry Regarder's power,
They will flee in every direction.
If, scorched by the fire-flame
Of the poisonous breath
Of boas, vipers, and scorpions,
He thinks of the Cry Regarder's power,
Instantly at his voice they will retreat.
Clouds thunder and lightning flashes,
Hail falls and rain streams:
He thinks of the Cry Regarder's power
And all instantly are scattered.
The living, crushed and harassed,
Oppressed by countless pains:
The Cry Regarder with his mystic wisdom
Can save [such] a suffering world.
Perfect in supernatural powers,
Widely practiced in wisdom and tact,
In the lands of the universe there is no place
Where he does not manifest himself.
All the evil states of existence,
Hells, ghosts, and animals,

Sorrows of birth, age, disease, death,
All by degrees are ended by him.
True regard, serene regard,
Far-reaching wise regard,
Regard of pity, compassionate regard,
Ever longed for, ever looked for!
Pure and serene in radiance,
Wisdom's sun destroying darkness,
Subduer of woes of storm and fire,
Who illumines all the world!
Law of pity, thunder quivering,
Compassion wondrous as a great cloud,
Pouring spiritual rain like nectar,
Quenching the flames of distress!
In disputes before a magistrate,
Or in fear in battle's array,
If he thinks of the Cry Regarder's power
All his enemies will be routed.
His is the wondrous voice, voice of the world-regarder,
Brahma-voice, voice of the rolling tide,
Voice all world-surpassing,
Therefore ever to be kept in mind,
With never a doubting thought.
Regarder of the World's Cries, pure and holy,
In pain, distress, death, calamity,
Able to be a sure reliance,
Perfect in all merit,
With compassionate eyes beholding all,
Boundless ocean of blessings!
Prostrate let us revere him.”⁵

Thereupon the Bodhisattva Stage Holder⁶ rose from his seat, and went before and said to the Buddha: “World-honored One! If any living being hears of the sovereign work and the all-sided transcend- ent powers [shown in] this chapter of the Bodhisattva Regarder of

the Cries of the World, it should be known that the merits of this man are not a few.”

While the Buddha preached this chapter of the All-sided One, the eighty-four thousand living beings in the assembly all set their minds upon Perfect Enlightenment, with which nothing can compare.

5. The extant Sanskrit text here adds other verses, for which see Kern's translation.

6. Or “Earth Holder.”