

# AN OUTLINE OF THE LOTUS SŪTRA

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## Introduction

This is an outline of the popular edition of the *Myōhōrengekyō*, the "Sūtra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law." The *Myōhōrengekyō* is the title of the Chinese version of the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* translated by Kumārajīva in 406. Recent investigations reveal that the popular edition of the *Myōhōrengekyō* differs from the translation of Kumārajīva in the following three points:

1. The translation of Kumārajīva did not contain Chapter XII. It is most probable that this was translated by Fa-hsien 法獻 and Fa-i 法意 in 490, and inserted in Kumārajīva's translation before the time of Hui-ssu 慧思 (514—577).<sup>1</sup> Moreover it seems that this chapter was not treated as an integral part of the *Myōhōrengekyō* until sometime between 567 and 597.<sup>2</sup>

However, its absence from Kumārajīva's translation does not mean that the Sanskrit text of this chapter was made later than the time of Kumārajīva. The Chinese version of the sūtra translated by Dharmarakṣa in 286 under the title of the *Shōhokekyō*, the "Sūtra of the Flower of the Right Law," includes this chapter. Its absence from Kumārajīva's version is due to the fact that it was missing from the Sanskrit text used by the translator.

2. Kumārajīva's version did not contain the verses and the prose section following them at the end of Chapter XXV. This last part of the chapter is found in the same chapter of another Chinese version of the sūtra translated by Jñānagupta-Dharmagupta in 601

1. Kogaku Fuse, *Hokekyō-seiritsu-shi*, p. 329.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 330.

under the title of the *Tembon-myōhōrengekyō*, the “Sūtra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law with an Additional Chapter.” It is clear that this part was adopted from Jñānagupta-Dharmagupta’s version, and it is most probable that the adoption was made at the beginning of the T’ang Period (610—907).<sup>3</sup> Judging from the fact that Dharmarakṣa’s version does not have this part either, it can be said that, after the formation of the Sanskrit text used by Kumārajīva or Dharmarakṣa, the text used by Jñānagupta-Dharmagupta was made with this addition. Jñānagupta-Dharmagupta’s version shows that the text they used had many new additions, of which only the addition to Chapter XXV was adopted in the *Myōhōrengekyō*. Incidentally, the Sanskrit text available today is quite similar to the Sanskrit text supposed to have been used by Jñānagupta-Dharmagupta.<sup>4</sup>

3. The translation of Kumārajīva was originally compiled in seven volumes. The compiling of some copies of this sūtra in eight volumes began sometime between 602 and 663, and the eight-volume text became more popular than the seven-volume one around 730.<sup>5</sup>

The Taishō Tripitaka contains the seven-volume text. The first three volumes of the seven-volume text are identical with those of the eight-volume text in regard to the chapters contained therein. In the seven-volume text, Chapters VIII to XIII are given in Vol. IV; Chapters XIV to XVII, in Vol. V; Chapters XVIII to XXIII, in Vol. VI; and Chapters XXIV to XXVIII, in Vol. VII. In the eight-volume text, Chapters VIII to XI are put in Vol. IV; Chapters XII to XV, in Vol. V; Chapters XVI to XIX in Vol. VI; Chapters XX to XXIV, in Vol. VII, and Chapters XXV to XXVIII, in Vol. VIII.

The *Myōhōrengekyō* preserves the oldest form of the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, because the Sanskrit text used by Kumārajīva was older than that used by Dharmarakṣa, although it was translated later.

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3. *Ibid.*, p. 339.

4. Yukio Sakamoto, Yutaka Iwamoto, *Hokekyō Jō*, p. 409.

5. Kogaku Fuse, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

According to Dr. Kogaku Fuse, the Sanskrit text used by Kumārajīva was composed of four parts: the oldest part and three additions to it. He holds that the oldest part of this sūtra consisted of the verses contained in Chapters I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, and XVIII of the popular edition of this sūtra, which was composed in the first century B.C. The first addition to this was the prose sections of the abovementioned ten chapters, which were made in the first century A.D. The second addition was Chapters X, XI, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII, XIX, XX, and XXI of the popular edition of this sūtra, which were composed about 100 A.D. The third addition, which covers the remaining chapters, was made about 150 A.D.<sup>6</sup>

Before going into the outline of this sūtra, it is absolutely necessary to understand that it is composed in the form of a drama consisting of six scenes.

### **The First Scene: Śākyamuni Buddha on Mt. Sacred Eagle<sup>7</sup>**

Śākyamuni Buddha is staying on Mt. Sacred Eagle in the City of King-House.<sup>8</sup> The Buddha displays various wonders. Maitreya Bodhisattva asks Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva why these wonders happen. Mañjuśrī answers him. (Chapter I.)

The Buddha expounds the Law to Śāriputra (Chapter II.)

Śāriputra understands the Law. The Buddha assures him of his future Buddhahood. At the request of Śāriputra, the Buddha expounds the Law to the monks, nuns, and male and female lay devotees with the parable of a burning house. (Chapter III.)

Mahā-Kāśyapa, Subūti, Mahā-Kātyāyana, and Mahā-Maud-

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6. *Ibid.*, p. 127 ff.

7. Ḡḍhrakūṭa, popularly known as Vulture Peak.

8. Rājagṛha.

galyāyana express their understanding of the Law by telling the Buddha the parable of a prodigal son. (Chapter IV.)

The Buddha expounds the Law to Mahā-Kāśyapa and other disciples with the simile of herbs. (Chapter V.)

The Buddha assures the four Śrāvakas<sup>9</sup> of their future Buddhahood. (Chapter VI.)

The Buddha reveals to the monks that in his previous existence he was the sixteenth son of a king. He expounds the Law to them with the parable of a city in fantasy. (Chapter VII.)

The Buddha assures the five hundred Arhats,<sup>10</sup> including Pūrṇa and Ājñāta-Kaundinya, of their future Buddhahood. They express their gratitude to the Buddha by telling him the parable of a gem in the coat. (Chapter VIII.)

The Buddha assures Ānanda, Rāhula, and two thousand Śrāvakas of their future Buddhahood. (Chapter IX.)

The Buddha expounds the Law to eighty thousand Bodhisattvas, by turning to the Medicine-King Bodhisattva.<sup>11</sup> (Chapter X.)

## **The Second Scene : The Appearance of the Stupa of the Many-Treasures Buddha<sup>12</sup>**

The Stūpa of the Many-Treasures Buddha springs out from

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9. A Śrāvaka means originally a hearer or a disciple, but in the Mahāyāna sūtras it means a follower of the Lesser Vehicle.

10. "One who deserves oblations." It was originally an epithet of the Buddha. In the Mahāyāna sūtras this word is given to the Śrāvakas of the highest rank.

11. Bhaiṣajyarāja Bodhisattva.

12. Prabhūtaratna Buddha.

underground and stays in the sky above Mt. Sacred Eagle. The door of the stūpa is kept closed. The Many-Treasures Buddha praises Śākyamuni Buddha from within the stūpa. The Great-Eloquence Bodhisattva<sup>13</sup> asks Śākyamuni why all this happens. Śākyamuni explains the reason to him. The Bodhisattva asks Śākyamuni to open the door of the stūpa so that he may be able to see the Many-Treasures Buddha. Śākyamuni says that, in order to open the door, he is required by the Many-Treasures Buddha to collect Śākyamuni's manifestations who are now the Buddhas of the worlds of the ten quarters.<sup>14</sup> The Bodhisattva says that he also wishes to see the Buddhas of Manifestation. Śākyamuni illuminates the worlds of the ten quarters with his light. The Buddhas in those worlds come to the Sahā-World,<sup>15</sup> each accompanied by a Bodhisattva. Śākyamuni rises from his seat, goes up to the sky, and opens the door of the stūpa with the fingers of his right hand. The Many-Treasures Buddha moves sideways, and tells Śākyamuni to come in. Śākyamuni enters the stūpa, sits by his side, and raises the congregation up to the sky. The Buddhas who have come from the worlds of the ten quarters stay on the ground. Śākyamuni expresses his wish to transmit this sūtra to someone. (Chapter XI.)

### **The Third Scene (Interlude): Śākyamuni Buddha and the Many-Treasures Buddha on Mt. Sacred Eagle**

Śākyamuni Buddha and the Many-Treasures Buddha are

13. Mahāpratibhāna Bodhisattva.

14. The eight points of the compass, the nadir, and zenith.

15. The world of Śākyamuni Buddha. The world we live in.

staying on Mt. Sacred Eagle. Śākyamuni assures Devadatta of his future Buddhahood. Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva returns from his oversea itinerancy. The eight-year-old daughter of the Dragon-king Sāgara comes to Mt. Sacred Eagle from the sea. She changes herself into a man, goes to the Taintless-World in the south, and becomes a Buddha. (Chapter XII.)

### **The Fourth Scene : The Continuation of the Second Scene**

The Buddha assures six thousand nuns, including Mahā-Prajāpatī and Yaśodharā, of their future Buddhahood. The eighty billion nayuta<sup>16</sup> Bodhisattvas, including Medicine-King Great-Eloquence, ask the Buddha to transmit this sūtra to them. (Chapter XIII.)

Mañjuśrī asks the Buddha about a peaceful way of propagating this sūtra. The Buddha answers. (Chapter XIV.)

### **The Fifth Scene : The Appearance of Bodhisattvas from Underground**

The Bodhisattvas, including Maitreya, ask the Buddha to transmit this sūtra to them. The Buddha refuses their request, and calls innumerable Bodhisattvas from underground. Maitreya asks the Buddha who they are. The Buddha answers that they are his disciples. Maitreya asks him when and where he taught them. (Chapter XV.)

The Buddha reveals his eternity to Maitreya and others. (Chapter XVI.)

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16. Ten million.

The Buddha describes the merits of the person who understands the eternity of the Buddha. (Chapter XVII.)

The Buddha describes the merits of the person who rejoices upon hearing the Lotus Sūtra. (Chapter XVIII.)

The Buddha describes the merits of the teacher of the Law. (Chapter XIX.)

The Buddha tells the story of his previous existence in which he was the Never-Despising Bodhisattva.<sup>17</sup> (Chapter XX.)

The Bodhisattvas who have sprung out from underground express their wish to propagate this sūtra after the extinction of the Buddha. Śākyamuni and the Buddhas from the other worlds show their approval of the proposal of the Bodhisattvas by gesture, and then Śākyamuni transmits this sūtra to the Bodhisattvas. (Chapter XXI.)

Śākyamuni Buddha transmits this sūtra to all the Bodhisattvas in the congregation. He gets out of the stūpa of the Many-Treasures Buddha. (Chapter XXII.)

### **The Sixth Scene : Śākyamuni Buddha on Mt. Sacred Eagle**

The Star-King-Flower Bodhisattva<sup>18</sup> asks Śākyamuni why the Medicine-King appears in this world. Śākyamuni tells him the story of the previous life of the Medicine-King Bodhisattva in order to explain the reason. The Many-Treasures Buddha praises the Star-King-Flower Bodhisattva for his asking Śākyamuni a good question. (Chapter XXIII.)

The Wonderful-Voice Bodhisattva<sup>19</sup> comes to the Sahā-World

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17. Sadāparibhūta Bodhisattva.

18. Nakṣatra-rāja-samkusumitābhijñā Bodhisattva.

19. Gadgadasvara Bodhisattva.

from the Pure-Light-Adornment World in the east. He sees Śākyamuni, the Many-Treasures Buddha, Mañjuśrī, and others. He saves the living beings of the Sahā-World by variously transforming himself. He makes oblations to Śākyamuni and the stūpa of the Many-Treasures Buddha, and returns home. (Chapter XXIV.)

The Endless-Mind Bodhisattva<sup>20</sup> asks Śākyamuni about the meaning of the name of the Seeing-World-Voice Bodhisattva.<sup>21</sup> The Buddha answers. The Endless-Mind Bodhisattva takes his necklace and presents it to the Seeing-World-Voice Bodhisattva, who refuses to take the gift. Śākyamuni tells Seeing-World-Voice to receive it. He consents. Immediately after he takes it, he divides it into two, and offers one part of it to Śākyamuni, and the other to the stūpa of the Many-Treasures Buddha. (Chapter XXV.)

The Medicine-King Bodhisattva, the Brave-in-Giving Bodhisattva,<sup>22</sup> Vaiśravaṇa,<sup>23</sup> the World-Holding Heavenly-King,<sup>24</sup> the ten rākṣasīs,<sup>25</sup> the Mother-of-Devils,<sup>26</sup> her children, and their attendants utter their spells for the protection of the keeper of this sūtra. (Chapter XXVI.)

The Buddha tells the great multitude the story of the life of King Wonderful-Adornment, who was the previous form of the Flower-Virtue Bodhisattva.<sup>27</sup> (Chapter XXVII.)

20. Akṣayamati Bodhisattva.

21. Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva.

22. Pradānasūra Bodhisattva.

23. One of the Four Quarter Kings.

24. Virūḍhaka, one of the Four Quarter Kings.

25. Female devils.

26. Hārīti.

27. Padmaśrī Bodhisattva.



The Universal-Sage Bodhisattva<sup>28</sup> comes to the Sahā-World from the world of the Treasure Might-Virtue-Superior-King Buddha in the east. He asks the Buddha how to obtain this sūtra after the extinction of the Buddha. The Buddha answers. The Bodhisattva utters his spells to protect the keeper of this sūtra. The Buddha praises him. The congregation keeps the words of the Buddha and retires. (Chapter XXVIII.)

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28. Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.

## Chapter I. Introduction

Śākyamuni Buddha was staying on Mt. Sacred Eagle in the City of King-House, surrounded by the great multitude, including eighty thousand Bodhisattvas and twelve thousand Śrāvakas. He expounded a sūtra of the Great Vehicle,<sup>29</sup> entitled "Innumerable Teachings." Having expounded this sūtra, he sat facing east and entered into a samādhi.<sup>30</sup> Beautiful flowers came down from the sky, and the earth quaked. The Buddha emitted rays of light from the white curls between his eyebrows. By this light eighteen thousand worlds in the east were seen from the Sahā-World. Maitreya Bohisattva asked Mañjuśri Bodhisattva why these wonders happened. Mañjuśri answered, "They may be a good omen that the Buddha will deliver a wonderful teaching."

## Chapter II. Expedients

The Buddha said to Śāriputra :<sup>31</sup>

"I know the reality of all things, that is, the universality and the particularity of all things. As far as the particularity of them is concerned, they have their own appearance, nature, substance, power, activity, primary cause, environmental cause, result, reward-and-retribution, and reality. As regards the universality of them, they are equal to each other in that they

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29. Mahāyāna.

30. Concentration of mind.

31. One of the ten great disciples of the Buddha.

have no substantiality in themselves, and that they are always in the status of eternal tranquility.

“In my Bodhisattvahood I performed the practices taught by the past Buddhas. As the result of this performance I realized this truth, that is, the reality of all things. Once I became a Buddha I obtained many mental faculties and physical characteristics. Anyone who realizes this truth will be able to become a Buddha. The past Buddhas appeared, the present Buddhas have appeared, and the future Buddhas will appear for the purpose of leading all living beings to Buddhahood. I am a Buddha. I have appeared for the same purpose.

“At first I expounded this truth without taking the variety of the capacities of my hearers into consideration. The Bodhisattvas understood me, but the other people did not, because their wisdom was covered with illusions. The people other than the Bodhisattvas were greedy, jealous, proud, flattering, dishonest, and ignorant. They were attached to the five desires<sup>32</sup> and wrong views. They had little virtue, little fortune. Because of this they did many evils and suffered much. They were trying to stop suffering by suffering. They were destined to transmigrate from one to another of the six regions.<sup>33</sup> I saw what they had in their minds, what they were doing, what they were desiring to have, and what good or bad they had done in their previous existences. I also saw that they were wishing to have a teaching easy for them to understand. Therefore, I modified my teaching in order to make it accord with their

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32. The desires caused by the five senses.

33. Hell, the world of hungry spirits, the world of animals, the world of asuras, the world of men, and heaven.

capacities. So I expounded an expedient teaching to them. This was the teaching of Nirvāṇa. It followed that two kinds of teachings existed at the same time, one for the Bodhisattvas, and the other for the Pratyekabuddhas<sup>34</sup> and Śrāvakas. The set of these two teachings was called the teaching of the three vehicles : that is, the vehicles for the Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Śrāvakas.

“ Having heard the teaching of Nirvāṇa, the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas have given up all illusions, and emancipated themselves from the bond of suffering. They have now been purified and become intelligent enough to understand the true teaching of the Buddha.

“ Therefore, I am now expounding my true teaching. Anyone can become a Buddha when he realizes the reality of all things. The reality of all things is the truth most profound, excellent, and wonderful. This is the truth of equality, the truth without being expediently divided into more than one. This is the teaching of the One Vehicle, the Buddha Vehicle, the Great Vehicle. The realization of this truth is the perfect and unsurpassed way to Buddhahood.”

### Chapter III. A Parable

Śāriputra said to the Buddha :

“ I am glad to hear your true teaching. When you preached

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34. A Pratyekabuddha is popularly rendered as a “solitary Buddha.” One who attains enlightenment independently of his teacher. It is usually held that he attains enlightenment through the realization of the twelve links of causality. According to Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas are the followers of Hinayāna Buddhism.

to us the teaching of Nirvāṇa, I believed that that was your true teaching. So I trained myself according to that teaching and attained Nirvāṇa. But afterwards you preached to the Bodhisattvas the way to become Buddhas. I regretted that I had trained myself by your early teaching. I thought that, if I had waited for your later sermons, I would have been given a chance to become a Buddha. But now I understand that the teaching of Nirvāṇa is an expedient teaching to lead us to Buddhahood. I am very happy because I have realized that I shall be able to become a Buddha in my future life."

The Buddha said to Śāriputra :

"I am glad that you understand my true teaching. To tell the truth I taught you this Unsurpassed Way in your previous life. At that time you studied the Way under me. But you forget that you had already studied it when you came to me in your present life. In order to cause you to remember what you had studied in your previous life, I have expounded this Lotus Sūtra.

"You will become a Buddha in your future life. The name of the Buddha will be Flower-Light. The name of the world of the Buddha will be Free-from-Taint. The world will be replete with gods and men. You will expound the Law to the people there, just as I am now doing here."

Śāriputra said to the Buddha :

"The monks, nuns and male and female lay devotees present here do not seem to understand your true teaching. Please expound it to them once more."

The Buddha told him the following parable.

## The Parable of a Burning House

Once upon a time there was a rich man. He had many children. One day when he was out a man came running to him and told him that his house was burning, and that his children were still playing in the house without knowing the danger of being burnt. The father hurried back home. He had no time to rescue them with his arms. He called, "Come out, quick!" But they were too much attached to their pleasures to listen to their father. He was quite at a loss what to do. Then he remembered that they had been wishing to have some carts to ride in. He got an idea. He called, "Come out. Here I have sheep-carts, deer-carts, and bullock-carts for you." Hearing this, they all ran out of the house and were saved from burning. Now the father gave them, not the three kinds of carts he had told them about, but large white bullock-carts they had never expected to have.

The Buddha said to Śāriputra :

"I am the father of all living beings. The triple world<sup>35</sup> is like the burning house. The living beings are suffering from

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35. According to the Buddhist cosmology, heaven is composed of twenty-four layers or spheres. The six lowest heavens and the regions below the lowest heaven are regarded as the abode of the living beings having desires, and collectively called the Realm of Desire. The other heavens are held to be inhabited by the gods without desire, and collectively called the Realm of Form. There is nothing besides these two realms in this world, and this nothingness is conceived in the consciousness. The consciousness is called the Formless Realm. This world is, therefore, made of three realms: the Realm of Desire, the Realm of Form, and the Formless Realm; hence, the triple world.

birth, age, disease, and death. They are poisoned by greed, anger, and ignorance. Because of this they will in most cases go to hell, or the world of animals or hungry spirits. When they are reborn in heaven or the world of men, they will be poor and have to part from beloved ones and meet with those whom they hate. Notwithstanding this, however, they are now attached to the five desires. They do not know that the world is full of suffering like the burning house, nor do they seek for emancipation. I once tried to save them, but in vain, because they were too much attached to worldly pleasures to be intelligent enough to understand the true teaching of the Buddha. Therefore, as a device to lead them to Buddhahood, I expounded the teaching of the Three Vehicles.

“The Śrāvaka-vehicle is the teaching for those who have some intelligence, hear the Law from the Buddha, and seek for Nirvāṇa. The Pratyekabuddha-vehicle is the teaching for those who hear the Law from the Buddha, seek for the knowledge of naturalness, love solitude and tranquility, and attain the knowledge of the causes of all things. The Great Vehicle is the teaching for those who hear the Law from the Buddha, seek for the wisdom and other faculties of the Buddha, have compassion towards all living beings, benefit gods and men, and emancipate all living beings from suffering.

“Now I see that many living beings have attained Nirvāṇa. Therefore, I now cause them to attain the true Nirvāṇa, that is, the Nirvāṇa of the Buddha. That is the Great Vehicle. The Nirvāṇa I have expounded hitherto is not the true Nirvāṇa. The true Nirvāṇa is attainable through the wisdom of the Buddha. What you should have is the wisdom of the Buddha.

“The teaching of the Four Noble Truths<sup>36</sup> I have hitherto expounded is the teaching for those who have little intelligence, and much attachment to the five desires. One cannot attain real emancipation by the teaching of the Four Noble Truths, which is not the Unsurpassed Way to Buddhahood.

“The Lotus Sūtra is expounded for the people of high intelligence and profound faith. Do not expound this sūtra to those who are proud, idle, or selfish. Those who have little intelligence and are attached to the five desires will not be able to understand this sūtra. Those who slander this sūtra will destroy the seeds of Buddhahood of all living beings. Those who hate the keeper of this sūtra will mostly go to hell in their next life. When they get out of hell, they will be sent to the world of animals. Even when they are reborn in the world of men, they will suffer much.

“Expound this sūtra to those who are intelligent enough to hear the Way to Buddhahood, to those who are faithful, upright, honest, and not angry, to those who are compassionate to those who are observing the precepts, and to those who wish to have good friends and do not spare their lives in expounding this sūtra.”

## Chapter IV. Understanding by Faith

Thereupon Subhūti, Mahā-Kātyāyana, Mahā-Kāśyapa, and

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36. 1. All is suffering, 2. The cause of suffering is desire, 3. Nirvāṇa brings cessation of suffering, 4. The Way to Nirvāṇa is the Eightfold Path: right view, right thinking, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right endeavour, right memory, and right meditation.



Mahā-Maudgalyāyana<sup>37</sup> said to the Buddha :

“ We are very glad to hear that our fellow-disciple Śāriputra will become a Buddha in his future life. We also shall be assured of our future Buddhahood. We thought that we should never be given a chance to become Buddhas, because we are too old to do the Bodhisattva practices required for the attainment of Buddhahood. Now we feel as if we had been given wonderful treasures we had never expected to have. Shall we express our joy by telling the following parable? ”

### **The Parable of a Prodigal Son**

Once upon a time there was a boy. He had a father and no brother. One day he ran away from his father. The father looked for him in all directions but could not find him. Tired with the searching, he stayed at a city and engaged in commerce. He became rich. He was always mindful of his son, but never told any one that he had a missing son. Fifty years passed. The son was now a day laborer, changing his working place from time to time. One day in order to find a job he came to the city where his father was living. He was frightened at the sight of a gorgeous residence. Looking into the front yard of the residence from the gate he saw a rich man sitting on a beautiful chair accompanied by many servants. He said to himself, “ He must be a king or a man as great as a king. If I loiter around here, I may be caught and put in forced labor. I had better go quickly.” Then he hurried away.

Before he left there, however, he was caught by the eyes of the rich man who was his father. At a glance the father

37. These four Śrāvakas are among the ten great disciples of the Buddha.

identified the poor man as his son. Immediately he sent a servant to catch him. Caught by the servant, the son cried, "Let me go. I didn't do anything bad. Don't punish me. Don't kill me!" Then he fainted. Seeing this, the father gave up his attempt to bring his son abruptly. By his order cold water was poured on the face of the poor man. Brought to himself, the son was allowed to go.

Then the father sent two poor-looking men to him. They said to him just as they had been told to say by their master, "We need a dirt-sweeper to work in the house you have just seen. We shall work with you. You will be paid twice the usual wages. Come with us." The son agreed with them, and came to the back section of the house. Then he worked there. One day the father put on the dirt-sweeping overalls, and came to his son. He said to his son, "I will pay you more. Here are food and other necessaries within your reach. You can have them as much as you want. Make yourself at home. Don't go away. I feel you are like my real son." The son was glad to hear this, but still thought that he was an humble man coming from without.

Twenty years passed. Now the father was very old and ill in health. One day he said to his son, "I have many treasures in the storehouse. I will entrust you with the care of these treasures. Don't lose any of them." The son supervised the treasures but had no idea that they would be his own property in the future. After a while the son came to realize that he was not so humble as he had thought to be. Now the father invited his relatives, the king, ministers, and other dignitaries, and declared to them, "This is my real son. All my property

is his.”

“We are like the poor son. We have been suffering from poverty for so long a time that our nature has become too mean and impure to understand your excellent teaching. You saw that we people of low intelligence were able to understand only an expedient teaching. Therefore you taught us the Lesser Vehicle.<sup>38</sup> By this teaching we attained Nirvāṇa. We did not know that we are your sons and that we shall be able to become like you.”

## Chapter V. The Simile of Herbs

The Buddha said to Mahā-Kāśyapa and other disciples :

“Just as the various kinds of trees and grasses are watered by the same rainfall, all living beings develop themselves according to their natures by the same teaching of the Buddha. Gods and men may be likened to the smaller-sized herbs. The Śrāvakas who have destroyed illusions, attained Nirvāṇa, and secured the six supernatural powers<sup>39</sup>, and the Pratyekabuddhas who live in retired places, practise meditation, and have realized the truth of cause and effect, may be likened to the middle-sized herbs. The Bodhisattvas who perform the Bodhisattva practices in the belief that they will be able to become Buddhas may be likened to the larger-sized herbs. The Bodhisattvas

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38. Hinayāna.

39. The ability (1) to see anything, (2) to know the previous existences of oneself and others, (3) to annihilate illusions, (4) to go anywhere, (5) to hear anything, and (6) to know the minds of others.

who have compassion towards others may be likened to the shorter trees. The Bodhisattvas who save innumerable living beings may be likened to the taller trees. The Buddha aims at leading all living beings to Buddhahood. You Śrāvakas have not yet attained the true Nirvāṇa, that is, Buddhahood. You should realize that you are not Śrāvakas any more but that you are practising the way of Bodhisattvas, that is, the way to Buddhahood.”

## Chapter VI. The Assurance of Future Buddhahood

The Buddha said to the great multitude :

“Mahā-Kāśyapa will become a Buddha called Light. Subhūti will become a Buddha called Name-Form. Mahā-Kātyāyana will become a Buddha called Jāmbūnada-Golden-Light. Mahā-Maudgalyāyana will become a Buddha called Tamālapattra-Candana-Incense.”

## Chapter VII. The Parable of a City in Fantasy

The Buddha said to the monks :

“Innumerable kalpas ago there was a Buddha called Great-Supreme-Omniscience. At the request of gods and men he expounded the Four Noble Truths and the Twelve Links of Causality. The Twelve Links of Causality are ignorance, action, consciousness, name-and-form, the six sense-organs, touch, sensation, craving, grasping, existence, birth, and age-and-death. Those who heard these teachings emancipated themselves from

suffering.

“The Buddha had been a king before he renounced the world. He had sixteen sons when he was a king. These sixteen princes had already made oblations to innumerable Buddhas in their previous existences and sought for Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi.<sup>40</sup> Hearing the Law from the Buddha the sixteen princes renounced the world and became novices. They asked the Buddha for the way to Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi. The Buddha expounded the Lotus Sūtra to them. The sixteen novices understood the sūtra and became Bodhisattvas. After the Buddha retired, the sixteen Bodhisattvas expounded the Lotus Sūtra to all living beings.

“The sixteen Bodhisattvas are now Buddhas. They are expounding the Law in nine quarters; two each in the east, southeast, south, southwest, west, northwest, and north, one in the northeast, and the sixteenth one in this Sahā-World. The last one expounding the Law in this world is none other than Śākyamuni Buddha, that is, myself.

“I know the natures of all living beings. I know that the people being attached to the five desires prefer the teaching of the Lesser Vehicle. Therefore I expounded to them the teaching of Nirvāṇa. Now I see that they have attained Nirvāṇa, so I expound the Lotus Sūtra in order to lead them to the One Buddha-vehicle. I shall tell you a parable to explain this.

### **The Parable of a City in Fantasy**

Once upon a time there was a road five hundred yojanas<sup>41</sup>

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40. Perfect enlightenment; the enlightenment of the Buddha.

41. The distance of a day's journey by a king's chariot.

long through the wilderness full of dangers from wild beasts. There were no people living along the road. There were many wonderful treasures at the other end of the road. Now many people started walking along the road with a leader in order to obtain the treasures. They were tired with walking half-way. They said to their leader, "We are tired. We also are afraid of the wild beasts. We want to go home." Hearing this the leader made a city in fantasy by magic at the distance of three hundred yojanas from the starting point. He said to them, "There you see a city. You can take a rest there. Go ahead!" They were much encouraged and hurried on to the city where they were able to have a good rest. Seeing this the leader caused the city to disappear and said to them, "Our destination is near at hand. The city which has just disappeared was made by magic for the purpose of enabling you to reach your destination.

"If you were told of the One Buddha-vehicle from the outset, you would think that the way to Buddhahood is too long for you to go on through to your destination and would want to give up. In order to have you take a rest half-way, I taught you the truth of Nirvāṇa. Now I see that you have already attained Nirvāṇa, but you have not yet done what you should do. You are now close to the wisdom of the Buddha. The Nirvāṇa you have attained is not the true one. The three vehicles I showed you earlier were expedient teachings by which I wished to lead you to the One Buddha-vehicle."

## Chapter VIII. The Assurance of Future Buddhahood of the Five Hundred Disciples

Thereupon the Buddha assured Pūrna<sup>42</sup> and Ajñāta-Kaundinya<sup>43</sup> of their future Buddhahood. The five hundred Arhats also were assured of their future Buddhahood.

The five hundred Arhats expressed their gratitude to the Buddha by telling him the following parable.

### **The Parable of a Gem in the Coat**

Once upon a time there was a man who had a good friend. One day he visited his friend and fell asleep dead drunk. The host was a government officer. Before he left home for his office the following morning he gave a gem to the still sleeping man by fixing it to the back of his coat. The ill-mannered guest awoke after his host went out and left the house without noticing the gift fixed to the back of his coat. He worked hard for his livelihood, and satisfied himself with what little he earned. Later, when the officer happened to see his poor friend, he said, "Why do you toil so hard for money when you are still keeping the gem in the back of your coat?"

"Like the man ignorant of the gem in his own coat, we did not know that you had already given us the aspiration for the wisdom of the Buddha. We were satisfied with the way to Arhatship. Now we have been assured of our future Bud-

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42. One of the ten great disciples of the Buddha.

43. One of the five monks who heard the first sermon of the Buddha.

dhahood because we have realized that we ourselves are Bodhisattvas.”

## Chapter IX. The Assuarance of Buddhahood of the Other Śrāvakas

Thereupon the Buddha assured Ānanda<sup>44</sup> and Rāhula<sup>45</sup> of their future Buddhahood. Two thousand Śrāvakas, some of whom were still under training for Arhatship, also were assured of their future Buddhahood by the Buddha.

## Chapter X. The Teacher of the Law

The Buddha addressed the eighty thousand Bodhisattvas by turning to the Medicine-King Bodhisattva :

“I shall assure anyone of the future Buddhahood who even in a single thought rejoices at hearing even a verse or a phrase of the Lotus Sūtra. Anyone who keeps, reads, recites, expounds, and copies even a verse of this sūtra, will become a Buddha in his future life. So will anyone who joins his hands respectfully towards a copy of this sūtra, and makes the oblations of flowers, incense, necklaces, canopies, streamers, banners, robes, and music to it. Such a person has come to this world for the purpose of expounding this sūtra out of his compassion towards all living beings.

“After my extinction an evil world will come. Anyone who

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44. One of the ten great disciples of the Buddha.

45. The son of the Buddha. One of the ten great disciples of the Buddha.



expounds even a phrase of this sūtra to even a single man and even in secret in the evil world after my extinction is a messenger of the Tathāgata. It is more sinful to slander a monk or a layman who reads and recites this sūtra than to speak ill of the Buddha. Make the best oblations to him. Anyone who hears him expound the Law will immediately attain Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi, that is, perfect enlightenment.

“If you wish to enter the way to Buddhahood and to obtain the wisdom of the Buddha, you should make oblations to the keeper of the Lotus Sūtra. To the person who expounds this sūtra in the evil world, you should make the same oblations as you do to the Buddha, because he is a messenger of the Buddha. You will be given more happiness when you praise the keeper of this sūtra than when you praise the Buddha.

“The Lotus Sūtra is the most excellent sūtra ever expounded. No more excellent sūtra will be expounded hereafter. This is the secret lore of the Buddhas. Do not expound it to others carelessly. It has never been expounded explicitly. Many people have nursed jealousy and grudge against this sūtra even in my lifetime. More people will do so after my extinction.

“Erect a stūpa<sup>46</sup> to enshrine this sūtra, because in this sūtra exists the perfect body of the Buddha. You need not enshrine the relics of the Buddha in a stūpa. No one will be able to complete his Bodhisattva practices unless he sees, hears, reads, recites, copies, and keeps this sutra, and makes oblations to it.

“If you wish to expound this sūtra after my extinction, you should enter the room of the Tathāgata,<sup>47</sup> wear the robe of

46. A stūpa was primarily a mound to cover the relics of the Buddha.

47. “One who comes or goes in this way.” An epithet of the Buddha.

the Tathāgata, and sit on the seat of the Tathāgata. To enter the room of the Tathāgata means to have great compassion towards all living beings. To wear the robe of the Tathāgata means to be gentle and to persevere. To sit on the seat of the Tathāgata means to realize the truth that all things are insubstantial.

“When you expound this sūtra, some may speak ill of you or beat you with sticks or stones. Be patient with them. I shall despatch pious believers to make oblations to you. When you are persecuted I shall despatch men to protect you.”

## Chapter XI. The Appearance of a Stūpa

Thereupon a stūpa sprang out from underground and stayed in the sky above Mt. Sacred Eagle. The door of the stūpa was kept closed. Then a voice was heard from within the stūpa :

“Excellent, excellent! Śākyamuni Buddha has expounded the Lotus Sūtra to the great multitude. So it is, so it is. The teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha are all true.”

The Great-Eloquence Bodhisattva asked the Buddha, “Why does this stūpa come from underground? Why is the voice heard from within the stūpa?”

The Buddha said :

“There is the perfect body of a Buddha called Many-Treasures in this stūpa. That Buddha once lived in an eastern world called Treasure-Pure. When he was yet a Bodhisattva, he made a vow :

“I shall become a Buddha in my life. After I pass away

I shall sit in a stūpa, and the stūpa will be put underground. If anyone expounds the Lotus Sūtra after my extinction, I shall have my stūpa appear before him so that I may be able to tell him my approval of the truthfulness of his teachings.’

“In the due course of time, he became the Many-Treasures Buddha. When he was about to pass away, he said to the monks :

“‘If you wish to make oblations to my perfect body after my extinction, you should erect a stūpa, and enshrine therein my body in a sitting posture. Then put the stūpa underground with the door closed.’”

The Great-Eloquence Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, “I wish to see the door of the stūpa opened so that I may be able to see the Many-Treasures Buddha.”

The Buddha said :

“The Many-Treasures Buddha made another vow, ‘I shall never show myself to others unless the Buddha who has expounded the Lotus Sūtra collects his manifestations before my stūpa.’”

The Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, “I also wish to see your manifestations.”

Thereupon the Buddha emitted from the white curls between his eyebrows the rays of light which illuminated all the worlds of the ten quarters. Many Buddhas in those worlds were the manifestations of Śākyamuni Buddha. Led by the rays of light, those Buddhas of Manifestation left the Sahā-World, each accompanied by a Bodhisattva. Having reached this world, they each despatched a messenger to Śākyamuni Buddha to tell their wish to see the door of the stūpa of the Many-Treasures

Buddha opened.

Thereupon Śākyamuni Buddha rose from his seat, went up to the sky, and opened the door of the stūpa with the fingers of his right hand. All the congregation saw the perfect body of the Many-Treasures Buddha sitting therein as if he had been sitting in meditation and also heard him say, “Excellent, excellent, Śākyamuni Buddha! You have expounded the Lotus Sūtra with pleasure. I have come here to hear this sūtra.”

Now Many-Treasures moved sideways, and said to Śākyamuni, “Come in and sit here.” Śākyamuni entered the stūpa and sat by his side. The congregation thought, ‘How glad we shall be to go up in the sky high enough to be with the two Buddhas!’ Seeing what they had in their minds Śākyamuni raised them up to the sky. He said to them :

“Now it is high time to propagate this Lotus Sūtra in this world. I shall pass away before long. I wish to transmit this sūtra to some one. Who will protect, read, and recite this sūtra after my extinction? It is difficult to keep, read, and expound this sūtra even for a moment even to a single man in the evil world after my extinction. It is difficult to hear this sūtra and ask a question about the meaning of it.

“This is the most excellent sūtra. This sūtra is the body of the Buddha himself. To keep this sūtra even for a moment is as meritorious as to observe all the precepts of the Buddha. Those who keep and read this sūtra are my real sons. Those who understand the meaning of this sūtra are the eyes of the world. All gods and men will make oblations to anyone who expounds this sūtra even for a moment in the dreadful world.”

## Chapter XII. Devadatta<sup>48</sup>

The Buddha said to the Bodhisattvas, gods, men, and the four kinds of devotees :

“When I was a king in my previous existence I tried my best to obtain the wisdom of the Buddha. I found that my involvement in ruling the country was inconvenient for seeking after the truth so I transferred the throne to the crown prince. Then I wandered about the world to find a person capable of expounding the Great Vehicle to me.

“One day a seer called Asita came to me and said that he knew the Great Vehicle called the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law. I was very glad to hear that and in no time at all asked him to expound it to me. He said that he would do so provided I would be his obedient servant. I agreed with him and began to serve him. I collected fruits, drew water, gathered firewood, and prepared meals for him. I even allowed my own body to be his seat. Thus I served him day and night for many years and finally I was permitted to hear the Law from him with the result that I became a Buddha.

“Devadatta is the reincarnation of the seer who had taught me the Great Vehicle in my previous existence. He is my teacher. It was by his teaching that I was able to become a Buddha. He will become a Buddha and be called Heavenly-King in his future life.

“Those who hear this Chapter of Devadatta of the Lotus

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48. A cousin of the Buddha. Once became a disciple of the Buddha, but later left him, and created a new order of his own. He vainly attempted to kill the Buddha. The Judas of Buddhism.

Sūtra and believe that the teachings expounded therein are true will be reborn in the presence of the Buddhas of the ten quarters or in heaven or in the world of men. When they are reborn in heaven or the world of men they will enjoy wonderful pleasures.”

At that time the Many-Treasures Buddha who was staying with Śākyamuni Buddha on Mt. Sacred Eagle was accompanied by a Bodhisattva called Accumulated-Wisdom.<sup>49</sup> This Bodhisattva had come to this world, accompanying the Many-Treasures Buddha. He said to the Many-Treasures Buddha, “Shall we go home?” Hearing this Śākyamuni Buddha said to the Bodhisattva, “See Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva and then go home.”

Thereupon Mañjuśrī and many other Bodhisattvas came to Mt. Sacred Eagle from the palace of the Dragon-king Sāgara in the sea and saluted the two Buddhas.

Accumulated-Wisdom said to Mañjuśrī, “How many living beings did you save in the dragon palace?” Mañjuśrī said, “I will show you.” At that instant innumerable Bodhisattvas came to Mt. Sacred Eagle from the sea and saluted the two Buddhas.

Mañjuśrī said, “I expounded only the Lotus Sūtra there.” Accumulated-Wisdom said to Mañjuśrī, “Has anyone attained Buddhahood by acting according to this sūtra?” Mañjuśrī said, “Yes. An eight-year-old daughter of the dragon king has attained perfect enlightenment.”

Accumulated-Wisdom said, “That is unbelievable.”

At that moment the little princess appeared before the two Buddhas and saluted them. Śāriputra said to her, “I cannot

<sup>49</sup>. Prajñākūṭa Bodhisattva.

believe that you have attained perfect enlightenment. You are a woman. A woman is not qualified to become a Buddha."

She did not answer him but proceeded to Śākyamuni Buddha and presented him with a gem. The Buddha received it immediately. She said to Accumulated-Wisdom and Śāriputra,

"Did the Buddha receive my present immediately or not?" They answered, "Immediately." She said, "So shall I become a Buddha."

At that instant she changed herself into a man and went to the Taintless World in the south. There he became a Buddha and began to expound the Wonderful Law to the people there. Seeing this Accumulated-Wisdom and Śāriputra became silent.

### Chapter XIII. The Vow to Keep the Sūtra

Thereupon the Medicine-King Bodhisattva and the Great-Eloquence Bodhisattva said to the Buddha :

"We will keep, read, recite, and copy this sūtra, make various oblations to it, and expound it to the living beings of the evil world after your extinction. Those living beings may be arrogant, greedy, and far from emancipation, but we will not spare our lives in expounding this sūtra to them."

There were five hundred Arhats who had already been assured of their future Buddhahood. Besides them there were eight thousand Śrāvakas who also had been assured of their future Buddhahood.

Thereupon the Buddha assured the six thousand nuns in the

congregation, headed by Mahāprajāpati<sup>50</sup> and Yaśodharā,<sup>51</sup> of their future Buddhahood.

All of these Arhats, Śrāvakas, and nuns said to the Buddha, “We will expound this sūtra not in this Sahā-World but in some other worlds, because the people in this world are arrogant, angry, and dishonest.”

Thereupon the eighty billion nayuta Bodhisattvas in the congregation said to the Buddha :

“Entrust us with the propagation of this sūtra after your extinction. We will cause all the living beings of the worlds of the ten quarters to keep, read, recite, copy, and expound this sūtra, act according to it, and memorize it correctly.

“Many ignorant people in the dreadful world after your extinction will speak ill of us or strike us with sticks or swords. We will endure all this.

“The monks in the evil world will be cunning, flattering, and arrogant. They will pretend to be sages, and despise ordinary men. They will preach to laymen for gain. In the presence of the king, ministers, and other laymen and monks, they will slander us, saying, ‘The Lotus Sūtra is of their own making. Their teachings are heretic. They want to deceive the people of the world in order to obtain fame and gain.’ They will sometimes drive us out of our temples. We will endure all this.

“We vow to you and the Buddhas who have come from the worlds of the ten quarters that we will keep, protect, and

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50. The younger sister of the mother of the Buddha. Māyā, the mother of the Buddha, died a week after his birth, and her sister married his father.

51. She was formerly the wife of the Buddha.



expound this sūtra after your extinction. Do not worry about the propagation of this sūtra in the future.”

## Chapter XIV. Peaceful Practices

Thereupon Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva said to the Buddha :

“ These Bodhisattvas are extraordinarily great, indeed. They have vowed to you that they will propagate this sūtra in the evil world after your extinction even though they will be spoken ill of or struck with sticks or swords or driven out of their temples. Few are so brave and competent as they. How much fewer there will be in the Age of Degeneration after your extinction ! Is there any means by which an ordinary person can propagate this sūtra peacefully without being spoken ill of or struck with sticks or swords or driven out of his temple ? ”

The Buddha said to him :

“ Yes. There are some peaceful practices suitable for such a person. They are :

“ Be patient, mild, meek, and gentle. Do not be rash. Do not be surprised by adversity. Do not cling to any extreme. Do not cling even to non-clinging to any extreme.

“ Do not approach kings, princes, ministers, or other government leaders. Do not approach the followers of other religions, or the people who seek for Śrāvakahood. Do not approach the writers of worldly literature. Do not approach sports or amusements. Do not approach hunters, butchers, fishermen, or other people who kill for profit. But when they come to you expound the Law to them.

“Do not approach women who are attached to the five desires. When you preach to women do not laugh playfully. Be willing to sit in meditation, live in a retired place, and concentrate your mind.

“See that all things are void and insubstantial. See things as they are. Things reveal themselves as they really are. They are not one-sided. They are free from any quality. They do not come or go. They do not rise or perish. They are void of name and form. They are caused only by the perversion of perceptions. Perverted people say, ‘They exist,’ or ‘They do not exist,’ or ‘They are born,’ or ‘They are not born.’

“Do not look at others with jealousy. Do not flatter or deceive them. Do not criticize them. Do not hate them. Do not have fruitless disputes with them. Give up anger and pride. Be simple and honest.

“Do not despise anyone who studies the teachings of the Buddha in any way. Do not speak ill of them or point out their faults. Do not say to them, ‘You are far from the True Way. You will not be able to attain Buddhahood.’

“Then you will not be spoken ill of or struck with sticks or swords or driven out of your temples.

“The Lotus Sūtra contains my most important teaching. This is the store of the secret lore of all the Buddhas. This is my final teaching. I shall tell you a parable in order to explain that the most important teaching is the final one.

### **The Parable of a Great King**

Once upon a time there was a great king. He requested the kings of the neighbouring countries to surrender to him.

They did not consent. So he fought with them and conquered them. He granted various rewards to his men according to the degree of their merits. The rewards were paddyfields, houses, villages, cities, garments, personal ornaments, treasures, elephants, horses, vehicles, and servants. After he gave all of these to them he called a soldier of extraordinary merit and gave him a brilliant gem which he had kept in his top-knot.

“I am like the king. When I became the king of the triple world, I taught all living beings the truth of Nirvāṇa. Now that they have emancipated themselves from illusions I am expounding to them the Lotus Sūtra in order to lead them to Buddhahood. This sūtra has been expounded for the first time — never before. I have reserved this all this while. Now is the time to make it known. This is above all the other sūtras. Few believe this sūtra. I am expounding it with patience. Fewer will believe this in the Age of Degeneration.

“Anyone who reads this sūtra with these peaceful practices will be free from grief, sorrow, disease, and pain. His complexion will be fair. He will not be poor or ugly. He will be loved and respected by others. He will not be harmed by sticks, swords, or poison. He will be able to go anywhere without fear. And, if anyone speaks ill of him, the speaker’s mouth will be shut.

## Chapter XV. The Appearance of Bodhisattvas from Underground

Thereupon the Bodhisattvas who had come from the other

worlds said to the Buddha, "We will propagate this sūtra in this world. Transmit this sūtra to us."

The Buddha said to them, "You need not do so. There are persons in this world who are proper for that work."

At that instant, the Sahā-World quaked and cracked, and from under the four quarters of the world, innumerable Bodhisattvas sprang out. They went up to the sky and saluted the Many-Treasures Buddha and Śākyamuni Buddha both of whom were staying in the stūpa hanging in the air. These Bodhisattvas had four leaders: Superior-Practice, Limitless-Practice, Pure-Practice, and Steadily-Established Practice.<sup>52</sup> The four Bodhisattvas said to the Buddha:

"Are you in good health? Are you peaceful? Are the people here ready to understand your teachings? Do they not fatigue you? Are you not tired with teaching them?"

The Buddha said to them:

"I am peaceful. I am in good health. All living beings here are ready to be saved. I am not tired with teaching them. Those who had studied the Lesser Vehicle did not believe my teachings at first. But now I have caused them to hear this sūtra and enter into the Way to Buddhahood."

The Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, "We are very glad to hear that."

Maitreya Bodhisattva said to the Buddha:

"We have never seen these Bodhisattvas before. Whence and why did they come? Who expounded the Law to them? Under whom did they resolve to seek the Way to Buddhahood? What teaching of the Buddha did they learn? What

52. Viśiṣṭacāritra, Anantacāritra, Viśuddhacāritra, and Supratīṣṭitacāritra.

sūtra do they keep?"

The Buddha said to Maitreya :

"They were taught by me after I attained Buddhahood in this Sahā-World. I caused them to aspire for the Way to Buddhahood. They have lived in the sky under this Sahā-World. They do not like to preach much to the multitude. They wish to keep away from bustling crowds. They like to stay in a quiet place. They are my disciples. They are my sons. They are fearless in teaching wonderful truths. I taught them in the remotest past. They have been seeking for the wisdom of the Buddha all this while."

Maitreya and others said to the Buddha :

"This is unbelievable. You were once a crown prince. You left the palace of the Śākya<sup>53</sup>, sat under the Bodhi-tree<sup>54</sup> not far from the City of Gayā, and attained Buddhahood. It is only a little more than forty years since then. How can you teach so many Bodhisattvas in such a short time? Moreover you say that you taught them in the remotest past. How can it be that you taught them long before you attained Buddhahood? It is difficult to believe you. It is as difficult as to believe a man of twenty-five years old, who say pointing to men of a hundred years old, 'They are my sons.' It is as difficult as to believe men of a hundred years old, who say, pointing to a man of twenty-five years old, 'This is our father.' If you say that a father is younger than his sons, no one will believe you. Please explain all this to us."

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53. The name of the clan to which the Buddha belonged. The word Śākya-muni means the "Sage of the Śākyas".

54. A'so called Bo-tree.

## Chapter XVI. The Duration of the Life of the Buddha

Thereupon the Buddha said to Maitreya and others :

“ You think that I attained Buddhahood a little more than forty years ago at the place of enlightenment not far from the City of Gayā. You are wrong. I attained Buddhahood long before that, that is, in the remotest past. Since then I have been teaching the living beings of this Sahā-World. According to the variety of their capacities, I tell them of the duration of my life differently. To the living beings of little virtue who were seeking for the Lesser Vehicle, I said expediently, ‘ When I was young I left home and attained Buddhahood.’

“ I see the triple world as it really is. Nothing is born or extinct. Nothing comes or goes. Nothing is real or unreal. Nothing is equal to or different from anything else. I do not see the triple world as the living beings of the triple world do. They are various in their natures, desires, deeds, memories, and intelligence. Therefore, I expound the Law in various ways in order to cause all living beings to have the roots of goodness. The duration of my life is limitless. My life is eternal. I shall never be extinct.

“ The Buddhas appear rarely in this world. It is difficult to meet with a Buddha. The living beings of little virtue, however, do not know this. Because they always see me they think that they can see me at any time, and do not plant any root of goodness. They cling to the five desires and are put into

the net of wrong views. They are too familiar and satiated with me to see how rare the chance to see a Buddha is. In order to save them I will disappear from this world in the near future. When they see me pass away, they will realize the difficulty in seeing me, and plant the roots of goodness. I shall tell you a parable to explain this.

### **The Parable of an Excellent Physician**

Once upon a time there was an excellent physician. He had many sons. One day he went out on business. In his absence the sons took poison by mistake. They writhed in agony, rolling on the ground. At that instant the father returned home and found them suffering. He heard them crying, "Save us! We took poison by mistake."

He immediately compounded a medicine by pounding the herbs having a good colour, smell, and taste, and gave it to them. He said, "This is a good medicine. Take this and you will be cured at once."

Some of them took the medicine and recovered their health at once, but the others did not. Because of the poison they had already lost their right minds and thought that the medicine was not a medicine but poison.

Seeing this the father thought, "These sons are so poisoned that they are perverted. I will get them to take the medicine by some device."

Then he said to them, "I am now old and decrepit. I shall soon pass away. I will put this medicine here." He went out again, and after a while sent home a messenger to tell his sons, "Your father has just died."

Hearing this the perverted sons felt extremely sorry and thought, "If our father were with us, he would love and protect us. Now we are lonely and helpless. We have no refuge." When they thought this they recovered their right minds and realized that the medicine he had left for them was really a good medicine. So they took it and cured their disease. The father, who heard that all his sons had recovered their health, returned home to their joyful surprise.

The Buddha said to Maitreya and others, "Is this physician to be accused of falsehood?"

They said to the Buddha, "No. He did not tell a falsehood."

The Buddha said:

"I am like the father. I attained Buddhahood in the remotest past. Since then I have been leading innumerable living beings into the Way to Buddhahood. I always stay here and expound the Law. Those who have performed all the meritorious deeds are gentle and upright and able to see that I always stay here. But those who have evil karmas<sup>55</sup> are sinful and perverted. They think that this world is filled with sorrow, fear, and other sufferings, and also that it is about to be destroyed. Nevertheless, however, these people are wilful, licentious, and attached to the five desires, because they always see me. They will surely fall into the evil regions in their future life. In order to save them I will disappear from this world. When they see me pass away they will make oblations to my relics with love and respect and become devout, upright, and gentle. Thereupon I will show myself to them again on Mt. Sacred

55. A karma is anything which is thought, said, or done.



Eagle.

“This world of mine is peaceful, undefiled, and indestructible. I am the father of the world. I am always thinking: How can I cause all living beings to enter into the Way to Buddhahood and quickly become Buddhas?”

## Chapter XVII. The Variety of Merits

Thereupon those who heard of the longevity of the Buddha obtained great merits.

The Buddha said to Maitreya:

“The merits they have now obtained are various: the realization of the truth of birthlessness, the faculty of memorizing dhāraṇis,<sup>56</sup> eloquence without hindrance, the faculty of turning illusions into enlightenment, the faculty of rolling the irrevocable wheel of the Law, and so on.”

Maitreya said to the Buddha:

“We are very glad to hear that the duration of your life is so long. We have never heard of it before. We have now planted the roots of goodness. We shall be able to attain perfect enlightenment.”

The Buddha said to Maitreya:

“Anyone who is resolute in his mind, pure and upright in his heart, learned, able to maintain what is good, subdue what is evil, and understand my words correctly will understand and believe my longevity. He will obtain more merits than when he performs five of the six pāramitās<sup>57</sup>: alms-giving, the ob-

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56. Formulas.

57. 1 to 5 are given here; 6. attainment of wisdom.

servance of the precepts, patience, endeavour, and meditation. It cannot be that he will even fall from the way to perfect enlightenment. He will see me expounding the Law on Mt. Sacred Eagle, surrounded by Bodhisattvas and Śrāvakas, and also will see this Sahā-World decorated beautifully with treasures.

“ Anyone who hears this sūtra, causes others to hear it, keeps it, causes others to keep it, reads and recites it, expounds it to others, copies it, causes others to copy it, and offers flowers, incense, lights, and other valuable things to a copy of it in the evil world in the Age of Degeneration after my extinction should be considered to be carrying the Buddha on his head. He need not build stūpas or monasteries in my honour or offer clothing, food, bedding, or medicine to the monks, because he should be considered to have already done all this.

“ Anyone who not only does all this but also builds stūpas and monasteries, makes oblations to the monks, praises the Bodhisattvas, observes the precepts, keeps good teachings with patience and endeavour, sits in meditation, and has intelligence enough to answer questions, has already come close to perfect enlightenment. Bow and make oblations to him just as you do to the Buddha. Erect a stūpa in the place where he sat, stood, walked about, or expounded even a verse of this sūtra, and make oblations to the stūpa just as you do to the stūpa of the Buddha.”

## Chapter XVIII. The Merits of the Person Who Rejoices upon Hearing this Sūtra

Thereupon Maitreya said to the Buddha :

“ Some people rejoice but do nothing else particularly when they hear this sūtra. Are they also given some merits ? ”

The Buddha said to Maitreya :

“ Yes. Suppose a man rejoices upon hearing this sūtra after my extinction. He tells what he has heard to his father or mother or relative or friend. The person who has heard from him, rejoices, and tells what he has heard to another person. The third person also rejoices and tells what he has heard to a fourth person. In this way the fiftieth person rejoices upon hearing even a verse of this sūtra. The merits of the fiftieth person are more than the merits of the person who satisfies all living beings of the world with the gifts of the seven treasures, carriages, palaces, and towers for eighty years, and then expounds the Law to them in order to lead them to Arhatship.

“ Anyone who goes to a monastery and hears this sūtra even for a moment will be able to go to heaven in his next life. Anyone who, while sitting at the place where this sūtra is expounded, persuades a newcomer to sit to hear it, or shares with him his seat, will be given a seat in heaven or a seat like that of a king of men in his next life.

“ Anyone who tells another person of this sūtra and causes him to hear it even for a moment will be able to live with the Bodhisattvas who have acquired dhāraṇīs, see the Buddha, and hear the Law in his next life. How much more are the

merits of the person who not only rejoices upon hearing this sūtra but also reads and recites it, and expounds it to the great multitude ! ”

## Chapter XIX. The Merits of the Teacher of the Law

Thereupon the Buddha said to the Constant-Endeavour Bodhisattva<sup>58</sup> :

“ Anyone who keeps, reads, recites, expounds, or copies the Lotus Sūtra will be able to see all the mountains, forests, rivers, and seas in the world, all the regions down to hell and up to heaven, and all living beings therein. He also will be able to see what the living beings are doing now and to what region each of them is destined to go.

“ He also will be able to hear the sounds of carts, the sounds of conches, drums, gongs, bells, lyres, harps, reed-pipes, and flutes, the songs by men, the calling of kalavinkas, jīvajīvakas, and other birds, the sounds of fire, water, and wind, the cries of the denizens in hell, the voices of elephants, horses, cows, and other animals, the shouting of hungry spirits, the voices of dragons, yakṣas,<sup>59</sup> asuras,<sup>60</sup> and other supernatural beings, the cries, sighs, laughing, and talking of men, women, boys, and girls, whether they are righteous or unrighteous, suffering or delighted, joyful or joyless, the voices of gods, the voices of monks, nuns, Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas, and

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58. Satata-samitābhi-yukta Bodhisattva.

59. A cannibal demon.

60. A warlike demon.

Buddhas.

“He also will be able to recognize by smell the grasses, trees, flowers, and fruits, the kinds of incense, the kinds of living beings such as elephants, horses, cows, sheep, lions, tigers, wolves, wild oxen, buffalos, asuras, kings, princes, ministers, men, women, boys, girls, gods, goddesses, monks, Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Buddhas.

“The things which taste bad, unpleasant, bitter, or stringent, will become delicious when put on his tongue. He will be able to raise deep and wonderful voices, which will penetrate into the hearts of the hearers and cause them to rejoice. All the gods, goddesses, kings, princes, and their attendants will come to listen to him. All the dragons, yakṣas, asuras, and other supernatural beings also will come to him, reverence him, make oblations to him, and hear the Law from him. He will be attended by all the people of his country, and protected by the Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Buddhas. The Buddhas will expound the Law facing the place where he is staying, and sometimes appear before him with their disciples.

“His skin will be as sleek as emerald, and everything will be reflected on it.

“When he hears a verse or a phrase of this sūtra, he will be able to understand the innumerable meanings involved therein, and expound the meanings correctly. When he expounds the books of instruction for secular life, or gives advice to the government, or teaches the way to earn a living, he will be able to abide by the right teachings of the Buddha; he will be able to understand the thoughts, words, and deeds of all living beings. Whatever he thinks or says will be consistent

with the teachings of the Buddha. He will be loved and respected by all living beings, live peaceful, and expound the Law clearly with many good and skilful words.”

## Chapter XX. The Never-Despising Bodhisattva

The Buddha said to the Great-Power-Possessing Bodhisattva<sup>61</sup>:

“Innumerable kalpas ago there was a Buddha called Majestic-Voice-King in the World of Great Achievement. He expounded the Lotus Sūtra to many people. His teachings lost their authenticity some time after his extinction and only the counterfeits of them came to be propagated.

“At that time there was a Bodhisattva called Never-Despising. His appearance was of a monk. He made it a rule to bow to the people he met, saying, ‘I deeply respect you because I know that you will become Buddhas after you practise the Way of Bodhisattvas.’ When he saw people in the distance, he went to them and made a bow, saying, ‘I do not despise you because you will become Buddhas.’ Some of them were arrogant, because they were attached to wrong views. They abused him, saying, ‘Where did you come from, you fool? We do not need such a false assurance of our future Buddhahood.’ They sometimes struck him with a stick, or a piece of wood, or a tile, or a stone. He endured all this persecution in order to expiate all the sins which he had ever committed. Everytime he was struck he ran away and exclaimed in a loud voice from a distance, ‘I never despise you because you will become Buddhas.’ That is why he was called Never-  
61. Mahāsthāma-prāpta Bodhisattva.

Despising.

“When he was about to pass away he heard the Majestic-Voice-King Buddha expounding the Lotus Sūtra in the sky. On hearing him, he had his eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin purified, and his life prolonged. In his prolonged life he expounded the Lotus Sūtra. The arrogant people heard the Lotus Sūtra from him, and became his followers. Many other people who heard the sūtra from him also began to aspire for perfect enlightenment. In his following existence he also kept, read, recited, and expounded the Lotus Sūtra, and finally became a Buddha.

“The Never-Despising Bodhisattva was none other than myself. If I had not kept, read, or recited the Lotus Sūtra, or expounded it to others in the person of the Never-Despising Bodhisattva, I should not have attained perfect enlightenment so quickly as I did. The people who were attached to wrong views at that time were no other people than the five hundred Bodhisattvas headed by Bhadrapala, the five hundred nuns headed by Lion-Moon,<sup>62</sup> and the five hundred male lay devotees headed by Thinking-Buddha,<sup>63</sup> all of them being present in this congregation. I had already encouraged them to hear the Lotus Sūtra in my previous existence. They are now irrevocably seeking for perfect enlightenment.

“After my extinction all the Bodhisattvas should keep, read, recite, expound, and copy the Lotus Sūtra. This sūtra will benefit them so as to cause them to attain perfect enlightenment. This sūtra is heard only once in a very long time.

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62. *Siṃha-candrā*.

63. *Sugatacetanā*.

Those who hear this sūtra after my extinction, should not doubt the truthfulness of it. If they devote themselves to the propagation of this sūtra, they will be able to see the Buddhas throughout their future existences, and quickly attain the enlightenment of the Buddha.”

## Chapter XXI. The Supernatural Power of the Tathāgata

At that time the Buddhas of Manifestation, that is, the manifestations of Śākyamuni Buddha, who had come to the Sahā-World from the worlds of the ten quarters, were sitting on the leonine seats under the trees of treasures. Śākyamuni Buddha was sitting with the Many-Treasures Buddha on the leonine seat in the stūpa of treasures, surrounded by Bodhisattvas, monks, nuns, and male and female lay devotees. The Bodhisattvas were of two divisions: (1) Superior-Practice and other Bodhisattvas who had sprung out from underground, and (2) Mañjusrī and other Bodhisattvas who had been staying in this Sahā-World from of old. All other living beings in the Sahā-World also were present.

Thereupon Superior-Practice and other Bodhisattvas who had sprung out from underground said to the Buddha:

“We will propagate this sūtra after your extinction not only in this world but also in the worlds of the ten quarters. We wish to obtain this true, pure, and great Law. We wish to keep, read, expound, and copy this sūtra, that is to say, to make oblations to this sūtra.”

Thereupon Śākyamuni Buddha stretched his tongue upwards



and emitted rays of light from his pores. So did the Buddhas who had come from the other worlds. Then Śākyamuni and the Buddhas from the other worlds pulled back their tongues and coughed and snapped their fingers. All living beings in the worlds of the ten quarters were able to see all this by the supernatural powers of Śākyamuni Buddha.

At that time the gods in the sky above the Sahā-World said to the living beings in the worlds of the ten quarters :

“Here is a world called Sahā, in which lives a Buddha called Śākyamuni. He has now expounded a sūtra called the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law. Bow and make oblations to him !”

Upon hearing this the living beings in the other worlds joined their hands towards the Sahā-World and said, “Honour to Śākyamuni Buddha ! Honour to Śākyamuni Buddha !” Then they strewed flowers, incense, and other valuables to the Sahā-World from the distance. The strewn things came to the Sahā-World just as the clouds gather.

The Buddha said to Superior-Practice and other Bodhisattvas who had sprung out from underground :

“The merits of this sūtra to be bestowed on the person to whom this sūtra is transmitted are beyond description. In this sūtra I have expounded all the truths attained by the Tathāgatas, all the unrestrained supernatural powers of the Tathāgatas, all the store of the secret lore of the Tathāgatas, and all the profound things of the Tathāgatas. Keep, read, recite, expound, and copy this sūtra, and act according to it after my extinction. Erect a stūpa at any place where anyone keeps, reads, recites, expounds, or copies this sūtra, or acts according

to it. Erect a stūpa at any place where a copy of this sūtra is found, be it in a garden, in a forest, under a tree, in a monastery, in the house of a layman, in a palace, in a mountain, in a valley, or in the wilderness. Make oblations to the stūpa erected. Such a place as this is, indeed, the place of enlightenment, where all the Buddhas attained enlightenment, turned the wheel of the Law, and entered into Parinirvāṇa.<sup>64</sup>

“Anyone who keeps this sūtra after my extinction, will be able to see not only me, but also the Many-Treasures Buddha, the Buddhas of Manifestation, and the Bodhisattvas whom I have taught today. He will be able to attain and explain the secret truths which the Buddhas attained at the place of enlightenment. He will be able to understand why I have expounded many sūtras, and how these sūtras are to be arranged. He will be able to expound these sūtras according to the true meaning of them. He will save all living beings from suffering, just as the light of the sun and the moon eliminates darkness. He will lead all Bodhisattvas to the One Vehicle. There is no doubt that he will attain the enlightenment of the Buddha.”

## Chapter XXII. The Transmission of the Law

Thereupon Śākyamuni Buddha rose from the seat of the Law and patted all the Bodhisattvas on the heads with his right hand saying :

“It took me a very long time to attain perfect enlightenment. It is difficult to attain it. Now I will transmit to you the teaching for perfect enlightenment. Propagate this teaching

<sup>64</sup>. Extinction. The death of the Buddha.

so that all living beings may be able to increase their benefits.”

He patted the Bodhisattvas on the heads twice more, saying:

“Keep, read, and recite the Lotus Sūtra, and propagate this teaching so that it may be known to all living beings. Follow me, and study this. Expound this sūtra to those who believe the wisdom of the Buddha, and you will be able to repay the favours given you by the Buddhas.”

Having heard this the Bodhisattvas were filled with joy. With more respect than ever they bent forward, bowed, joined their hands and said in one voice three times, “Certainly, we will do as you say. Do not worry!”

Thereupon Śākyamuni Buddha, wishing to send back the Many-Treasures Buddha and the Buddhas of Manifestation, got out of the stūpa of the Many-Treasures Buddha, and said to them, “Do as you like! Be the stūpa of the Many-Treasures Buddha returned to the place where it was!”

When he said this, the Many-Treasures Buddha, the Buddhas of Manifestation, the Bodhisattvas including Superior-Practice, the Śrāvakas including Śāriputra, and all the other living beings in the congregation had great joy.

### Chapter XXIII. The Previous Life of the Medicine-King Bodhisattva

Thereupon the Star-King-Flower Bodhisattva said to the Buddha :

“Why did the Medicine-King Bodhisattva appear in this Sahā-World in which he has to perform many austerities, when he has the liberty of living in another world where he can

enjoy a more peaceful life ?”

The Buddha said to him :

“Innumerable kalpas ago, there was a Buddha called Sun-Moon-Pure-Bright-Virtue. He expounded the Lotus Sūtra to the Bodhisattvas and Śravakas in his world. One of the Bodhisattvas was called Gladly-Seeing-All-Beings. After he heard the Lotus Sūtra from the Buddha he performed many austerities for years and finally attained the ability to see all living beings. Overwhelmed with joy he resolved to make oblations to the Buddha and to the sūtra. He offered flowers and incense to the Buddha, but it did not seem to him that these oblations were enough to express his gratitude to the Buddha. He thought that the best oblation to the Buddha would be his own body.

“Now he ate incense, drank oil, applied oil to his skin, sprinkled oil on his garment, and set fire to it in the presence of the Buddha. The flame illuminated innumerable worlds. The Buddhas of those worlds praised him, saying, ‘Your body burnt by yourself is the best oblation to the Buddha.’

“Soon after he passed away by this self-burning, he was reborn as a son of King Pure-Virtue in his old home world. The prince said to his father :

‘In my previous life I lived in this world, and was a disciple of the Buddha who is now staying in the sky seven times as high as the tāla-tree above us. I heard the Lotus Sūtra from him and finally obtained the ability to see all living beings. My previous life ended when I offered my body to the Buddha. Now I will make another oblation to him.’

“Then he sat in a tower. The tower went up carrying him

to the Buddha. He saluted the Buddha and said, 'I am glad to see you again.'

"The Buddha said to him :

'So am I. But I must tell you that I shall pass away to-night. Prepare my couch. Now I will transmit to you the teaching for perfect enlightenment. You shall be the teacher of the Bodhisattvas and my great disciples present here and the gods attending on me. My world shall be yours. After my extinction distribute my relics far and wide so as to cause people to make oblations to them. Erect thousands of stūpas to enshrine them.'

"The Buddha passed away soon after the middle of that night. The Gladly-Seeing-All-Beings Bodhisattva burnt the body of the Buddha with candana-wood, and collected the relics. Then he made eighty-four thousand urns, and put the relics of the Buddha in them. Then he erected eighty-four thousand stūpas, and enshrined the urns in them.

"He said to his disciples and others, 'I shall make an oblation to the relics of the Buddha.' Then he burned his elbows and offered the light produced thereby to the stūpas. Seeing this his disciples said sorrowfully, 'Our teacher is deformed.' He said to them, 'Do not be disappointed. I shall have my elbows again.' No sooner had he said this than his elbows were recovered.

"Do you know that the Gladly-Seeing-All-Beings Bodhisattva was none other than the Medicine-King Bodhisattva who is now living in this Sahā-World? He performed such austerities in his previous life. He is convinced that he will be able to perform any austerity in this Sahā-World. Therefore, he appeared

in this world.

“ If you wish to attain perfect enlightenment, burn a finger or a toe of yours, and offer the light produced thereby to the stūpa of the Buddha. Then you will be given more merits than those who offer anything else. Keep even a single stanza of the verses of the Lotus Sūtra, and you will be given more merits than those who offer the seven treasures to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Arhats.

“ The Lotus Sūtra is the most profound sūtra ever expounded by the Buddhas. It gives us more light than the other sūtras. It dispels the darkness of the non-good. It is the most excellent sūtra, the king of sūtras. The keeper of this sūtra is superior to any other living being.

“ This sūtra saves all living beings. It frees them from suffering. It benefits them. It enables them to fulfil their wishes. It delivers them from all diseases, and from the bonds of birth and death. Those who hear and copy this sūtra, cause others to do the same, and make the oblations of flowers, incense, lights, and other valuables to a copy of this sūtra will be given immeasurable merits.

“ The woman who hears and keeps this Chapter of the Previous Life of the Medicine-King Bodhisattva will not be a woman in her next life. The woman living in the later five hundred years after my extinction, if she hears, keeps, reads, and recites this sūtra, meditates on it, expounds it to others, and acts according to it, will be reborn, immediately after her life in this world of mine, in the world of Amitabha Buddha as a man. His (no more her) eyes will be purified, and with his purified eyes, he will be able to see innumerable Buddhas.

The Buddhas will praise him saying, 'You have defeated all devils, all your enemies, and the army of birth and death. You have secured our protection.'

"Anyone who rejoices at hearing this chapter and praises the Medicine-King Bodhisattva will be given innumerable merits. I will transmit this chapter to you. Propagate this chapter in the Jambudvīpa<sup>65</sup> in the later five hundred years after my extinction lest the devils should have a chance to act as they like.

"This sūtra is a good medicine for the diseases of the people of the world. Once they hear this sūtra, the sick will be able to cure their diseases. The keeper of this sūtra will be able to defeat the army of devils and save all living beings from the ocean of age, disease, and death."

When the Buddha expounded this chapter the Many-Treasures Buddha staying in his stūpa praised the Star-King-Flower Bodhisattva saying :

"You asked Śākyamuni Buddha a good question. By this question you have obtained inconceivable merits, and benefited innumerable living beings."

## Chapter XXIV. The Wonderful-Voice Bodhisattva

Thereupon Śākyamuni Buddha emitted rays of light to the east from the white curls between his eyebrows. The light illuminated innumerable worlds in the east. One of the worlds

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65. The name of the continent lying to the south of Mt. Sumeru: the continent where we live.

was called Pure-Light-Adornment. In that world was a Buddha called Pure-Flower-Star-King-Wisdom. Under him was a Bodhisattva called Wonderful-Voice. By the light of Śākyamuni Buddha, the Sahā-World was seen from the World of Pure-Light-Adornment. The Bodhisattva said to the Pure-Flower-Star-King-Wisdom Buddha :

“ I would like to visit the Sahā-World and pay homage to Śākyamuni Buddha. I also would like to see Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva, the Medicine-King Bodhisattva, the Brave-in-Giving Bodhisattva, the Star-King-Flower Bodhisattva, the Superior-Practice-Intent Bodhisattva,<sup>66</sup> the Adornment-King Bodhisattva,<sup>67</sup> and the Medicine-Superior Bodhisattva.<sup>68</sup>”

The Buddha said to him :

“ You may go. Bear in mind, however, that the Sahā-World is inferior to this world of ours. That world is full of impurities. Do not despise it. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of that world are smaller than we in stature. Do not despise them.”

The Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, “ I can go there only by your merits and wisdom.”

Then the Bodhisattva entered into a samādhi. By the power of the samādhi, he caused eighty-four thousand lotus-flowers to appear near Mt. Sacred Eagle in the Sahā-World. Seeing the flowers Mañjuśrī said to Śākyamuni Buddha, “ Why did these flowers appear before us ? ”

The Buddha said to him :

“ This tells us that the Wonderful-Voice Bodhisattva is

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66. Viśiṣṭacāritra Bodhisattva.

67. Vyūha-rāja Bodhisattva.

68. Bhaiṣajya-rāja-samudgata Bodhisattva.



coming to see me and to hear the Lotus Sutra. He will come with eighty-four thousand Bodhisattvas."

Mañjuśrī said to the Buddha, "Allow me to see him when he comes."

The Buddha said to him, "The Many-Treasures Buddha will tell him of your wish."

Thereupon the Many-Treasures Buddha called out to the east, "Wonderful-Voice! Come here! Mañjuśrī wishes to see you."

His voice was loud enough to be heard in the World of Pure-Light-Adornment. The Wonderful-Voice Bodhisattva left his world accompanied by eighty-four thousand Bodhisattvas. Having come to Śākyamuni Buddha he offered a necklace to the Buddha, and said:

"I have a message from the Pure-Flower-Star-King-Wisdom Buddha. He wishes to say: Are you in good health? Are you peaceful? Is it easy to save the living beings in your world? Have they much greed, anger, ignorance, jealousy, stinginess, and pride? Are they dutiful to their parents? Do they respect śramanas<sup>69</sup>? Have they wrong views? Are they good in heart? Do they control the five sense-organs? Are they able to defeat the māras<sup>70</sup>? Is the Many-Treasures Buddha healthy and peaceful? Can he stay long in your world? All this is the message from the Buddha. Allow me to see the Many-Treasures Buddha."

Śākyamuni Buddha said to the Many-Treasures Buddha, "This Bodhisattva wishes to see you."

The Many-Treasures Buddha said to Wonderful-Voice, "It

69. Monks.

70. Devils.

is good of you to come here to see Śākyamuni Buddha, Mañjuśrī, and others, and also to hear the Lotus Sūtra.”

The Flower-Virtue Bodhisattva said to Śākyamuni Buddha. “This Bodhisattva has come from a very distant world. His supernatural power is wonderful. How did he get that power?”

The Buddha said to him :

“In a kalpa called Pleasant-Sight there was a world, Sight-of-All-Worlds by name. In that world was a Buddha called Cloud-Thunder-Roll-King. The Wonderful-Voice Bodhisattva once lived under the Buddha. He made many kinds of music before the Buddha and offered many bowls to him. Because of this he was able to appear in the world where he lives now and to have such supernatural power as that.

“He will protect all living beings in this Sahā-World. He will expound this sūtra by taking various forms when necessary. In the worlds of the ten quarters also he will do the same. According to the variety of the living beings he may become a god, or a king, or a rich man, or a householder, or a prime minister, or a brahmin, or a monk, or a nun, or a male lay devotee, or a female lay devotee, or the wife of a rich man, or that of a householder, or that of a prime minister, or that of a brahmin, or a boy, or a girl, or a dragon, or a yakṣa, or a gandharva,<sup>71</sup> or an asura, or a garuḍa,<sup>72</sup> or a kin-nara,<sup>73</sup> or a mahoraga.<sup>74</sup> When he enters an Imperial harem he will change himself into a woman. He may become a Śrāvaka, or a Pratyekabuddha, or a Bodhisattva, or a Buddha.

71. A heavenly musician.

72. A golden-winged bird.

73. A heavenly musician.

74. A boa.

He may show his extinction to those who are to be saved by the sight of his extinction.”

The Wonderful-Voice Bodhisattva benefited innumerable living beings in the Sahā-World as Śākyamuni Buddha had said. Then he made oblations to Śākyamuni Buddha and the stūpa of the Many-Treasures Buddha, and left for his home world with the eighty-four thousand Bodhisattvas. On returning home he said to the Pure-Flower-Star-King-Wisdom Buddha :

“I saw Śākyamuni Buddha, the stūpa of the Many-Treasures Buddha, Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva, the Medicine-King Bodhisattva, the Obtaining-the-Power-of-Endeavour Bodhisattva, and the Brave-in-Giving Bodhisattva. I benefited the living beings in that world.”

## Chapter XXV. The Universal Gate of the Seeing-World-Voice Bodhisattva

Thereupon the Endless-Mind Bodhisattva asked Śākyamuni Buddha about the meaning of the name of the Seeing-World-Voice Bodhisattva.

The Buddha said to him :

“When he hears you call his name the Bodhisattva will understand the suffering you are now undergoing, and save you immediately. He understands the voice of the people of the world. That is why he is called Seeing-World-Voice. If you hear, keep, and call his name, see him, and think of him always, you will not be burnt in a fire, or washed by a flood. When you are thrown into a pit of fire, the pit will change

into a pond of water. Your ship will not be sunk by the waves. When your ship is washed ashore on the coast of the country of devils, you will not be attacked by the devils. The devils who come to kill you will lose their eyesight; no devil nor dragon will hurt you. Wild animals, snakes, vipers, and scorpions will go away from you. The sword or stick held against you will break asunder; the manacles, fetters, pillories, or chains in which you are bound up will break asunder. When you are in a law-court or a battlefield, your enemies will run away; when you are cursed to death, or about to be poisoned, the curser or the poisoner will die. The robber who is about to attack you will become compassionate towards you. When you fall over a cliff, you will not get hurt. You will be freed from lust, anger, and ignorance; thunder-storms will be stopped. A woman will be able to give birth to a good boy, if she wishes to have a boy, to a beautiful girl, if she wishes to have a girl.

“If you keep the name of this Bodhisattva and bow and make oblations to him, you will be given the same merits as when you keep the names of six thousand and two hundred million Bodhisattvas, and make the oblations of drink, food, clothing, bedding, and medicine to them until the time of their extinction.

“This Bodhisattva expounds the Law by taking various forms when necessary. According to the variety of the living beings he may become a Buddha, or a Pratyekabuddha, or a Śravaka, or a god, or a king, or a rich man, or a householder, or a prime minister, or a brahmin, or a monk, or a nun, or a male lay devotee, or a female lay devotee, or the wife of

a rich man, or that of a householder, or that of a prime minister, or that of a brahmin, or a boy, or a girl, or a dragon, or a yakṣa, or a gandharva, or a garuḍa, or a kinnara, or a mahoraga.

“The living beings in the evil regions will be released from birth, old age, disease, and death by the power of the Bodhisattva. The light of his wisdom stops calamities caused by wind and fire.”

The Endless-Mind Bodhisattva took his necklace and presented it to the Seeing-World-Voice Bodhisattva, who refused to take the gift. Śākyamuni told the Seeing-World-Voice Bodhisattva to receive it. He consented, but immediately after he took it, he divided it into two and offered one part of it to Śākyamuni and the other to the stūpa of the Many-Treasures Buddha.

The Earth-Holding Bodhisattva<sup>75</sup> said to the Buddha :

“Anyone who hears this Chapter of the Seeing-World-Voice Bodhisattva and realizes his activities and powers by which he shows the universal gate, will obtain great merits.”

When the Buddha expounded this Chapter of the Universal Gate, many living beings in the congregation began to aspire for perfect enlightenment. <sup>1</sup>

## Chapter XXVI. The Dhāraṇis

Thereupon the Medicine-King Bodhisattva said to the Buddha :

“How much happiness will be given to the good men and

75. Dharaṇindhara Bodhisattva.

women who keep, read, recite, understand, and copy the Lotus Sūtra?”

The Buddha said to him :

“The good men and women who keep, read, recite, and understand even a single stanza of the verses of the Lotus Sūtra and act according to it will be given more happiness than those who make oblations to innumerable Buddhas.”

The Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, “I will protect the expounder of the Law by giving him dhāraṇīs.”

Then he uttered his spells. He said to the Buddha :

“These spells were spoken by innumerable Buddhas. Those who attack this teacher of the Law should be considered to have already attacked those Buddhas.”

The Buddha praised him saying, “You will be able to give much benefit to the living beings by your spells.”

The Brave-in-Giving Bodhisattva said to the Buddha, “I also wish to utter spells in order to protect the person who keeps, reads, and recites the Lotus Sūtra.”

Then he uttered his spells. He said :

“These spells were spoken by innumerable Buddhas. Those Buddhas also enjoy uttering them. Those who attack this teacher of the Law should be considered to have already attacked those Buddhas.”

Vaiśravaṇa said to the Buddha, “I also wish to utter spells in order to remember the living beings and protect this teacher of the Law.”

Then he uttered his spells. He said :

“I also wish to protect the keeper of this sūtra so that he may suffer from no decay nor trouble within a hundred yojanas’

distance from here.”

The World-Holding Heavenly-King said to the Buddha, “ I also wish to protect the keeper of the Lotus Sūtra with spells.”

He uttered his spells. He said :

“ These spells were spoken by innumerable Buddhas. Those who attack this teacher of the Law should be considered to have already attacked those Buddhas.”

The ten rākṣasīs, the Mother-of-Devils, her children, and their attendants said to the Buddha, “ We also wish to protect the person who keeps, reads, and recites the Lotus Sūtra so that he may be saved from any decay or trouble.”

They uttered their spells. They said :

“ The devils can step on our heads, but shall not trouble the teacher of the Law. Anyone who does not follow our spells but troubles the teacher of the Law shall have his head split into seven pieces.”

The rakṣasīs said to the Buddha :

“ We also wish to protect the person who keeps, reads, and recites this sūtra, and acts according to it, so that he may be free from any decay or trouble and that the poison taken by him may be counteracted.”

The Buddha said to them :

“ Your happiness will be immeasurable even when you protect the person who keeps only the name of the Lotus Sūtra. More happiness will be given to you when you protect the person who keeps a copy of this sūtra, makes many kinds of oblations to it, and makes various lights before it.”

## Chapter XXVII. The Story of the Life of King Wonderful-Adornment

Thereupon the Buddha said to the great multitude :

“ A long time ago there was a kalpa called Gladly-Seeing. In that kalpa there lived a Buddha called Cloud-Thunder-Roll-Star-King-Flower-Wisdom in a world called Light-Adornment. In that world there lived a king, a queen, and two princes called Wonderful-Adornment, Pure-Virtue, Pure-Store, and Pure-Eyes respectively. The two princes had supernatural powers.

“ The Buddha expounded the Lotus Sūtra to his congregation. The two princes joined the congregation and heard the sūtra from him. They returned to the palace and said to the queen, Go to see the Buddha and hear the sūtra. We will go with you.

“ She said, ‘ Yes, I will. But I wonder if the king will. He believes in Brahmanism. Show some wonders to him, then he will go with us.’

“ Then the two princes displayed wonders. They jumped up to the sky seven times as high as the tāla-tree ; walked, stood, sat, and lay in the air ; issued water from the upper parts of their bodies, and fire from the lower parts of them. Then they issued water from the lower parts of their bodies, and fire from the upper parts of them. Then they became giants, dwarfs, and giants again. Then they disappeared from the sky and suddenly appeared on the earth. Then they dived into the earth, and stepped on the surface of water. Then they returned to



the sky.

“Surprised to see these wonders the king asked the two princes in the sky, ‘Who is your teacher?’ They said, ‘Our teacher is the Buddha sitting on the seat under the Bodhi-tree.’ The king said, ‘I will go with you to see him.’

“The two princes came down from the sky and said to the queen :

‘The king has now begun to aspire for perfect enlightenment. It is difficult to meet with a Buddha. It is also difficult to avert a misfortune. We wish to become śramanas. Allow us to leave home.’

“She said to them, ‘Yes, you may. I also will renounce the world. So will the king.’ The king gave in to her persuasion.

“The king, the queen, and the two princes came together to the Buddha. The Buddha expounded the Law to the king. The king and the queen took off their necklaces, which they gave to the Buddha. The necklaces went up to the sky seven times as high as the tāla-tree, and changed into a tower with four pillars. In the tower was a seat on which many garments were spread. The Buddha went up and sat on the seat in the tower. He said to the congregation :

‘This king will become a monk under me. He will become a Buddha called Śāla-Tree-King in a kalpa called Great-Height-King in a world called Great-Light.’

“The king abdicated from the throne in favour of his younger brother and renounced the world together with the queen and the two princes. After many years’ study and practice he went up to the sky, and said to the Buddha, ‘My two sons are my

true friends. I was converted from wrong views by them.’

“The Buddha said to him, ‘It is as you say. Your two sons had already kept the Lotus Sūtra under innumerable Buddhas in the past.’

“The king came down to the ground and said to the Buddha in the sky, ‘I will not act according to my mind; I will not have wrong views, pride, anger, or other evils.’ Then he retired.

“The king was the Flower-Virtue Bodhisattva present here. The queen was the Shining-Adornment-Form Bodhisattva<sup>76</sup> present here. The two princes were the Medicine-King Bodhisattva and the Medicine-Superior Bodhisattva, who are also present here. All gods and men should pay homage to those who know the names of these two brother Bodhisattvas.”

## Chapter XXVIII. The Encouragement of the Universal-Sage Bodhisattva

The Universal-Sage Bodhisattva came with many other Bodhisattvas to the Sahā-World from the world of the Treasure-Might-Virtue-Superior-King Buddha in the east. He saw Śākyamuni Buddha on Mt. Sacred Eagle and said to him:

“We heard that you had expounded the Lotus Sūtra here. Expound it to us. How will the Lotus Sūtra be obtained after your extinction?”

The Buddha said:

“Secure the protection of the Buddha, plant the roots of virtue, reach the stage of proceeding to enlightenment and

76. Vairocana-rasmi-pratimaṇḍita-rāja Bodhisattva.

resolve to save all living beings. Then you will be able to obtain it.”

The Bodhisattva said to him :

“I will protect those who keep this sūtra in the evil world which will come in the later five hundred years, so that they may not be attacked by devils. If anyone keeps, reads, and recites this sūtra while he walks or stands, or thinks it over while he sits, I will appear before him mounted on a white elephant with six tusks in order to protect him. If he forgets a phrase or a verse of this sūtra, I will tell him the part he forgets.

“Those who seek, keep, read, and recite this sūtra in the later five hundred years, if they wish to study this sūtra, should make efforts for three weeks. Then I will appear before them, mounted on a white elephant with six tusks, and expound the Law to them. I will give them my spells so that they may not be killed by devils, or captivated by women.”

Then he uttered his spells. He said to the Buddha again :

“It is only by my supernatural power that one can keep the Lotus Sūtra to be propagated in the Jambudvīpa. Anyone who copies this sūtra will be reborn in the Trāyastriṃśa Heaven<sup>77</sup> in his next life. In that heaven he will be able to enjoy himself among the maid-servants with a crown on his head. Anyone who keeps, reads, and recites this sūtra, memorizes it correctly, understands the meaning of it, and acts according to it will be patted on the head by the Buddhas. In his next

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77. The “Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods.” The top of Mt. Sumeru is so called because Indra lives in the center and eight gods live on the peak of each of the four quarters.

life he will reborn in the Tuṣita<sup>78</sup> Heaven, where Maitreya Bodhisattva lives. I will protect this sūtra so that it may be propagated in the Jambudvīpa after your extinction.”

The Buddha said to him :

“ When you see anyone keep, read, and recite this sūtra, memorize it correctly, and study and copy it, you should consider that he sees me, hears this sūtra direct from me, and makes oblations to me, and that I praise him, pat him on the head with my hands, and cover him with my robe. He will not be attached to the pleasures of the world. He will not like to read the sūtras or other writings of other religions, or to approach the adherents of those religions. He will not be glad to approach prostitutes, or hunters, or butchers, or those who breed pigs or sheep or fowls or dogs. He will not be greedy, ignorant, angry, jealous, or arrogant. He will not be attached to clothing, bedding, food, drink, or any other thing for a living. He will be honest, upright, happy, and virtuous. He will want little and learn to be contented. What he wishes will not end in failure. He will attain perfect enlightenment, and expound the Law.

“ Those who abuse him will be born blind in their present and subsequent existences. Those who blame him will suffer from white leprosy in their present life. Those who laugh at him will have ugly looks and serious illnesses in their present and subsequent existences. Those who make oblations to him will be given explicit rewards in their present life. Respect him as the Buddha.”

When the Buddha expounded this sūtra, the Bodhisattvas

78. The fourth lowest heaven.

An Outline of the Lotus Sūtra

including the Universal-Sage, the Śrāvakas including Śāriputra, and all the other living beings in the congregation had great joy, kept the words of the Buddha, paid homage to him and retired.

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CORRECTIONS

to  
What I Heard and Saw at the Tokyo Palace by  
Michio Kinoshita, Vol. VII, No. 4, 1966.

Page 282	1. 7, 8	instead of Kōhaku	read Kōkaku
" 285	1. 25	six	sixty
" 297	1. 24	school	school :
" 298	1. 9	student	student :
" 308	1. 18	past	post
" 312	1. 27	refectural	prefectural
" 318	1. 16	there	three