

## The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra The Analogy of the Transformed City

IBDSCL, Dec. 29, 30, 2018, by Nancy Yu

Good morning! Welcome to the International Buddha Dharma Society for Cosmic law to listen to today's Dharma talk! Today, we will continue the 12 Links of Dependent Origination. We will read another sutra: **the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra, the Analogy of the Transformed City**. In this sutra, the Great Penetrating Wisdom Buddha proclaimed the Four Noble Truth and the 12 Links of Dependent Origination. As we said before, reciting sutras are not for understanding a certain thing. When we recite sutras, we are attending the assembly, we are listening to the Buddha and we are resonating with the Buddha.

### Verse for Opening Sutras

The unsurpassed, profound, subtle and wondrous dharma is difficult to encounter, even in a hundred, thousand, million kalpas.  
Now we see and hear it, and are able to receive and maintain it.  
We vow to understand the Tathagata's true meaning.

### The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra The Analogy of the Transformed City

The Buddha told the Bhikshus, “long ago, past limitless, boundless, inconceivable, *asamkheya*eons, there was a Buddha called Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory, Thus Come One, One Worthy of Offerings, One of Proper and Universal Knowledge, One Whose Understanding and Conduct are Complete, A Well-gone One, One Who Understands the World, Unsurpassed Lord, Taming and Regulating Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, World Honored One. His country was named “ Good City,” and his *eon* was named “Great Mark”. O Bhikshus, it has been a great, long time since that Buddha passed into extinction.

Suppose someone were to grind all the earth in the three thousand great thousand worlds into ink powder and then suppose he passed through a thousand lands to the east and then dropped a particle the size of a mote of dust, and then passing through another thousand lands deposited another mote, and continued to do this until all the ink made of earth was exhausted. What do you think? Could a mathematician or his disciple ever reach the limit of the lands and know their number?

“No, World Honored One.”

“O Bhikshus, if the lands this person had passed through, whether or not he set down a particle in them, were all grounded into dust, and if each dust mote was equal to an *eon*, then the time since that Buddha passed into extinction would exceed their number by limitless, boundless, hundreds of thousands of tens of thousands of millions of *asamkheya* eons.

Using the power of the Thus Come One's knowledge and vision, I behold that time in the distant past as if it were today.

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

"I recall that in a past age,  
Limitless, boundless eons ago,  
There was a Buddha, doubly honored,  
By the name of Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory.

Suppose a person ground  
All of the earth that there was  
In three thousand great thousand lands  
Entirely into ink powder;  
And then suppose he passed through a thousand lands,  
And then let fall one particle of it,  
Continuing to drop particles in this way  
Until all the ink particles were gone.

Suppose all of the countries he passed through,  
Whether he dropped particles in them or not,  
Again were completely grounded into dust motes,  
And each dust mote was an eon;  
These grains of dust would in number  
Be exceeded by the number of eons  
Since that Buddha has passed into extinction;  
It has been limitless eons such as this.

The Thus Come One, with unobstructed wisdom,  
Knows of that Buddha's extinction,  
And of his Hearers and Bodhisattvas,  
As if seeing his extinction now.

Bhikshus, you should know  
The Buddha's wisdom is pure, subtle, and wondrous;  
Without outflows and without obstructions  
It penetrates limitless eons."

The Buddha told the Bhikshus, "The Buddha Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory had a life span of five hundred forty myriads of millions of *nayutas* of eons."

When this Buddha was seated on the Bodhimanda, having destroyed the troops of Mara, although he was on the point of attaining *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*, still the Buddhadharma did not appear before him. So it was for one minor *eon* and then onwards to ten minor *eons* that he sat in the lotus posture, body and mind unmoving, and yet the Buddhadharma still did not appear before him.

Thereupon, the gods of the Triyastimsha Heaven, spread out for the Buddha, under a Bodhi tree, a lion throne one *yojana* in height; on that throne the Buddha was to attain *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*. Just as he sat down upon that throne, the Kings of the Brahma Heavens rained down heavenly flowers over a distance of one hundred *yojanas*. A fragrant wind from time to time swept away the withered flowers as fresh ones rained down. This continued without interruption for a full ten minor *eons* as an offering to the Buddha, the rain of these flowers continuing right up until his extinction. In the same way the gods of the four heavenly Kings constantly played heavenly drums as an offering to that Buddha and the other gods made heavenly instrumental music for a full ten minor *eons*, right up until his extinction.

Bhikshus, the Buddha Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory passed through ten minor *eons* before the Buddhadharma finally manifested before him and he attained *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*.

Before that Buddha left home he had sixteen sons, the first of whom was named Accumulation of Knowledge. Each of them had a variety of precious, unusual fine toys. When they heard that their father had realized *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* they all cast aside these things they valued and went before the Buddha, escorted by their weeping mothers. Their grandfather, a Wheel-Turning Sage King, together with a hundred great ministers and with hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of citizens all surrounded them and accompanied them to the Bodhimanda, all wishing to draw near to the Thus Come One Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory, to make offerings to him, to honor, revere and praise him. When they arrived, they bowed with their head at his feet, and having circumambulated him, they singlemindedly joined their palms, respectfully gazed upward at the World Honored One, and uttered these verses:

“World Honored One of great and awesome virtue,  
For the sake of crossing over living beings  
After limitless millions of eons,  
You accomplished Buddhahood,  
And perfected all your vows;  
Unsurpassed is our good fortune.

Very rare you are, World Honored One,  
In one sitting, passing through ten minor eons,  
With body, hands, and feet,  
Still, secure, and unmoving.

Your mind, ever tranquil,  
Never knows distraction.  
Ultimate, your eternal extinction,  
As you dwell firmly in the non-outflow Dharma.

Now we see the World Honored One  
Serenely realize the Buddha Path;  
We all gain good benefit  
And proclaim our delight and great joy.

Living beings, ever tormented by suffering,  
Blind, and without a guide,  
Fail to recognize the Path which ends that pain,  
And do not know to seek their liberation.

During the long night the evil destinies increase,  
While the hosts of gods are reduced in number;  
From darkness they proceed into darkness,  
Never hearing the Buddha's name.

Now, the Buddha's gained the utmost  
Peace, rest, the non-outflow way;  
And we, and all the gods,  
To attain the greatest benefit  
Therefore bow our heads  
And return our lives to the Unsurpassed Honored One."

When the sixteen sons had finished praising the Buddha, they then entreated him to turn the Dharma-wheel, saying, "World Honored One, speak the Dharma and bring us peace, show us pity, and benefit both gods and humans." Then they spoke more verses saying:

"O Hero of the world, incomparable  
Adorned with a hundred blessings,  
And having attained unsurpassed wisdom,  
Pray speak for the sake of this world  
To cross over and liberate us and  
All classes of living beings as well.

And lead us to attain that wisdom,  
Demonstrate it: speak it in detail  
For, if we can attain Buddhahood,  
Other living beings can do the same.

The World Honored One knows the profound thoughts  
Within the minds of living beings;  
He knows the ways on which they walk  
And the strength of their wisdom,  
The pleasures and the blessings they have cultivated,  
And all the deeds done in former lives.  
The World Honored One, knowing all of this,  
Should turn the unsurpassed wheel !"

The Buddha, Shakyamuni, told the Bhikshus, "When the Buddha Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory attained *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*, in each of the ten directions, five hundred myriads of millions of Buddha worlds quaked in six ways. The dark recesses between those lands, that the awesome light of the sun and moon could not illumine then, were brightly lit, and the living beings therein were able to see one another. They all said, "where have all these living beings come from?" Further, in those lands, all the heavenly palaces, up to the Brahma

palaces, quaked in six ways. A great light shone everywhere, illuminating the entire universe and surpassing the light of the heavens.”

At that time, in five hundred myriads of millions of lands to the east, the Brahma Heaven palaces shone with a light twice that of their usual brightness. Each of the Brahma Heaven Kings had this thought, “now the palaces are brighter than ever before. What is the reason for this manifestation?”

Then, the Brahma Heaven Kings visited one another and discussed this matter. In the assembly there was one great Brahma Heaven King by the name of Rescuing All, who on behalf of the Brahma hosts spoke verses, saying,

“All of our palaces  
Are bright as never before;  
What is the reason for this?  
Let us seek it together.

Is it because a great and virtuous god has been born?  
Or because a Buddha has appeared in the world,  
That this great light  
Shines throughout the ten directions?”

At that time, the Brahma Heaven Kings from five hundred myriads of millions of lands, together with their palaces, each with sacks filled with heavenly flowers, went to the west to seek out this manifestation. They saw the Thus Come One Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory seated on the lion throne beneath the Bodhi tree in the Bodhimanda, revered and circumambulated by gods, dragon kings, *gandharvas*, *kinnnaras*, *mahoragas*, and beings both human and non-human. They saw as well the sixteen sons of the king requesting the Buddha to turn the Dharma-wheel.

Then, the Brahma Heaven Kings bowed with their heads at the Buddha’s feet, circumambulated him a hundred thousand times, and scattered heavenly flowers upon him. The flowers were piled as high as Mount Sumeru, and they offered them as well to the Buddha’s Bodhi tree, which was ten *yojanas* in height. Having made offerings of flowers, each presented his palace to the Buddha, saying, “pray show us pity, and benefit us by accepting and occupying these palaces that we offer you!”

Then the Brahma Heaven Kings, in front of the Buddha, with a single mind and the same voice, spoke verses in praise, saying:

“World Honored One, you are very rare,  
And difficult to encounter;  
Complete with limitless meritorious virtues,  
You are able to rescue and protect all creatures.

Great teacher of gods and humans,  
You who pity all the world  
All beings in the ten directions

Receive your beneficence.

We have come from  
Five hundred myriads of millions of lands,  
Setting aside the bliss of deep dhyana samadhi,  
For the sake of making offerings to the Buddha.  
Blessings we've gained in former lives  
Well ornament our palaces,  
Now we offer them to the World Honored One,  
Only praying you will show mercy and accept them."

At that time, the Brahma Heaven Kings, having praised the Buddha, said "We only pray that the World Honored One will turn the Dharma-wheel, crossing over living beings, opening up the way to Nirvana." Then; all the Brahma Heaven Kings, with one mind and the same voice, proclaimed these verses:

"Hero of the world, doubly perfect honored one,  
We only pray that  
You will expound and proclaim the Dharma,  
And through the power of your great compassion and pity  
Cross over suffering and tormented living beings."

Thereupon, the Thus Come One Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory, assented by his silence.

Furthermore, O Bhikshus, to the southeast the great Brahma Kings in five hundred myriads of millions of lands, seeing their palaces in dazzling brilliance as never before, jumped for joy, thinking it rare indeed.

They visited one another and discussed this matter. Then, in the assembly, a Brahma Heaven King by the name of Great Compassion, on behalf of the Brahma hosts spoke these verses:

"What is the reason for this event?  
Why has this sign appeared?  
All of our palaces  
Are aglow as never before.  
Has a greatly virtuous god been born?  
Or has a Buddha appeared in the world?  
We have never seen such signs before.

With one mind we should investigate it,  
Passing through a thousand myriads of millions of lands,  
Searching for the light, investigating it together.  
It must be that a Buddha has appeared  
To take across the suffering living beings."

At that time, five hundred myriads of millions of Brahma Heaven Kings, together with their palaces, each with sacks filled with heavenly flowers, went to the northwest to seek out this

manifestation. They saw the Thus Come One Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory seated on the lion throne beneath the Bodhi tree in the Bodhimanda, revered and circumambulated by gods, dragon kings, *gandharvas*, *kinnaras*, *mahoragas*, and beings both human and non-human. They saw, as well, the sixteen sons of the king requesting the Buddha to turn the Dharma-wheel.

Then the Brahma Heaven Kings bowed with their heads at the Buddha's feet, circumambulated him a hundred thousand times, then scattered heavenly flowers upon him. The flowers were piled as high as Mount Sumeru, and they offered them as well to the Buddha's Bodhi tree. Having made offerings of flowers, each presented his palace to the Buddha saying, "Show us pity and benefit us by accepting and occupying these palaces that we offer you!" Then the Brahma Heaven Kings, before the Buddha, with a single mind and the same voice, spoke verses in praise, saying,

"Sagely Lord, king among gods,  
With the kalavinka sound,  
To you who pity living beings,  
We now reverently bow.

The World Honored One is most rare,  
Appearing but once in long ages.  
One hundred and eighty eons have passed  
Empty, without a Buddha.

The three evil paths are full.  
The hosts of gods decrease.  
Now the Buddha has appeared in the world,  
To act as eyes for living beings,  
As a refuge for the world,  
Rescuing and protecting all creatures,  
A father for all beings,  
Pitying and benefiting them.  
Now, through blessings gained in former lives,  
We are enabled to meet the World Honored One."

At that time, the Brahma Heaven Gods, having praised the Buddha, said, "We only pray that the World Honored One will take pity on all beings and turn the Dharma-wheel to liberate living beings."

Then, the Brahma Heaven Kings, with one mind and a single voice, spoke verses saying,

"Great Sage, turn the Dharma-wheel,  
To reveal the marks of all Dharmas,  
To cross over tormented living beings,  
So they may gain great joy.

When living beings hear the Dharma,  
They may gain the way, or be reborn in the heavens;

The evil paths will decrease  
And those of patience and goodness will increase.”

At that time, the Thus Come One Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory assented by his silence.

Furthermore, O Bhikkshus, to the south, the great Brahma Kings in five hundred myriads of millions of Buddhalands, seeing their palaces in dazzling brilliance as never seen before, jumped for joy, thinking it rare indeed.

Thereupon, they visited one another and discussed this matter, wondering, “Why do our palaces glow with the light?” Then, in the assembly a Brahma Heaven King called Wonderful Dharma, on behalf of the Brahma hosts, spoke these verses,

“All of our palaces  
Shine with awesome brilliance;  
This cannot be for no reason;  
We should seek out this sign.

In a hundred thousand eons,  
Such a sign has never been seen.  
Has a great and virtuous god been born?  
Or has a Buddha appeared in the world?”

At that time, five hundred myriads of millions of Brahma Heaven Kings, together with their palaces, each with sacks filled with heavenly flowers, went to the north to seek out this manifestation. They saw the Thus Come One Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory seated on the lion throne beneath the Bodhi tree in the Bodhimanda, revered and circumambulated by gods, dragon kings, *gandharvas*, *kinnaras*, *mahoragas*, and beings both human and non-human. They saw, as well, the sixteen sons of the king requesting the Buddha to turn the Dharma-wheel.

Then the Brahma Heaven Kings bowed with their heads at the Buddha’s feet, circumambulated him a hundred thousand times and scattered heavenly flowers upon him. The flowers were piled as high as Mount Sumeru, and they offered them, as well to the Buddha’s Bodhi tree. Having made offerings of flowers, each presented his palace to the Buddha, saying, “Show us pity and benefit us by accepting and occupying these palaces that we offer you.” Then the Brahma Heaven Kings, before the Buddha, with a single mind and the same voice, spoke verses in praise, saying,

“The World Honored One is very hard to meet;  
He who breaks through all afflictions.  
Passing through a hundred and thirty aeons,  
Only now do we get to see him.

May living beings, starving and thirsty,  
Be filled with the rain of Dharma.  
He, whom we have never seen before,  
One of unlimited wisdom,



Rare as the Udumbara blossom  
Today, at last we have met.  
All of our palaces  
Receiving your light, are adorned.  
In your great compassion, World Honored One  
Pray accept and live with them.”

At that time, the Brahma Heaven Kings, having praised the Buddha, said, “We only pray that the World Honored One will turn the Dharma-wheel, causing the entire world with its gods, maras, Brahmans, shramanas, all to become peaceful and calm and to attain liberation.” Then, the Brahma Heaven Kings, with a single mind and the same voice, spoke verses in praise, saying,

“Honored One among gods and humans,  
Pray turn the unsurpassed wheel of Dharma.  
Beat upon the Dharma drum,  
And blow the great Dharma conch,

Let fall everywhere the great Dharma rain,  
To cross over limitless living beings.  
We all beseech you to expound and proclaim  
The profound, far reaching sound.”

Thereupon, the Thus Come One Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory assented by his silence.

And so it was in all directions from the southwest to the lower direction.

Then, five hundred myriads of millions of great Brahma Kings in the upper directions, seeing the palaces they rested in shining with awesome brilliance, as never before, jumped for joy, thinking it rare indeed.

They visited one another and discussed this matter, wondering, “Why do our palaces shine with this bright light?”

Then, in the assembly, a Brahma Heaven King by the name of Shikhin, on behalf of the Brahma hosts, spoke verses, saying,

“Now, for what reason  
Do our palaces shine  
With such an awesome light  
Adorned as never before?

Wondrous marks, such as these  
We have never seen before  
Has a great and virtuous god been born?  
Has a Buddha appeared in the world?”

At that time, five hundred myriads of millions of Brahma Heaven Kings, together with their palaces, each with sacks filled with heavenly flowers, went to the lower direction to seek out this sign. They saw the Thus Come One Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory seated on the lion throne beneath the Bodhi tree in the Bodhimanda, revered and circumambulated by gods, dragon kings, *gandharvas*, *kinnnaras*, *mahoragas*, and beings both human and non-human. They saw, as well, the sixteen sons of the king requesting the Buddha to turn the Dharma-wheel.

Then, the Brahma Heaven Kings bowed with their heads at the Buddha's feet, circumambulated him a hundred thousand times, and scattered heavenly flowers upon the Buddha. The flowers that they scattered were as high as Mount Sumeru, and they offered them as well to the Buddha's Bodhi tree. Having made offerings of flowers, they each presented their palace as an offering to the Buddha, saying, "We only pray that you will show us pity and benefit us by accepting and occupying these palaces." Then the Brahma Heaven Kings, before the Buddha, with one mind and a single voice, spoke these verses:

"It is good indeed to see the Buddhas,  
Honored Sages who save the world  
And who, from the prison of the triple realm  
Can effect escape for living beings,  
All-wise, revered by gods and humans,  
Pitying the flocks of beings  
Opening the door of sweet dew,  
Vastly saving all beings.

Limitless eons of yore  
Have passed emptily, without a Buddha.  
Before the World Honored One emerged,  
The ten directions were ever in darkness,  
The three evil paths increased,  
And the asuras flourished,  
While the hosts of gods diminished,  
Most falling into evil paths at death.

They did not hear the Dharma from the Buddha,  
But ever followed unwholesome paths.  
Their bodily strength and wisdom,  
Both decreased.  
Because of offense karma  
They lost joy and thoughts of joy.

They dwelt in Dharmas of deviant views,  
Not knowing the rules of goodness.  
Failing to receive the Buddha's transforming,  
They constantly fell into evil paths.

The Buddha acts as eyes for all the world,  
And but once in a long while does appear.

Out of pity for living beings,  
He manifests in the world,  
Transcends it and realizes right enlightenment.

We rejoice exceedingly;  
We and all the other beings,  
Are happy as never before,  
And all of our palaces  
Receive the light and are adorned.

We now offer them to the World Honored One.  
May he pity us and accept them.  
We vow that this merit and virtue  
May extend to all living beings,  
So that we and all beings  
May together realize the Buddha Way.”

At that time, the five hundred myriads of millions of Brahma Heaven Gods, having praised the Buddha in verse, addressed the Buddha, saying, “We only pray that the World Honored One will turn the Dharma-wheel to bring tranquility and liberation to many beings.” Then, the Brahma Heaven King spoke these verses of praise:

“World Honored One, turn the Dharma-wheel  
Sound the sweet dew Dharma-drum,  
To cross over tormented living beings,  
Showing them Nirvana’s path.

Pray, accept our request,  
And, with the great and subtle sound,  
Pity us, and set forth,  
Dharma gathered through countless eons.”

At that time, the Thus Come One Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory, having received the request of the Brahma Heaven Kings of the ten directions, as well as the sixteen princes, thereupon, three times turned the Dharma-wheel of twelve parts which cannot be turned by Shramanas, Brahmans, gods, maras, Brahmas, or other beings of the world. He said, “This is suffering. This is the origination of suffering. This is the extinction of suffering. This is the way to the extinction of suffering.”

And he extensively set forth the Dharma of the twelve causes and conditions:

ignorance conditions dispositions.  
Dispositions condition consciousness.  
Consciousness conditions name and form.  
Name and form condition the six sense organs.  
The six sense organs condition contact.  
Contact conditions feeling.  
Feeling conditions craving.

Craving conditions grasping.  
Grasping conditions becoming.  
Becoming conditions birth. Birth conditions old age and death, worry, grief, suffering and distress.

When ignorance is extinguished, dispositions are extinguished.  
When dispositions are extinguished, then consciousness is extinguished.  
When consciousness is extinguished, then name and form are extinguished.  
When name and form are extinguished, then the six sense organs are extinguished.  
When the six sense organs are extinguished, then contact is extinguished.  
When contact is extinguished, then feeling is extinguished.  
When feeling is extinguished, then craving is extinguished.  
When craving is extinguished, then grasping is extinguished.  
When grasping is extinguished, then becoming is extinguished.  
When becoming is extinguished, then birth is extinguished.  
When birth is extinguished, then old age and death, worry, grief, suffering and distress are extinguished.

When the Buddha spoke this Dharma, amidst the great assembly of gods and humans, six hundred myriads of millions of *nayutas* of human beings, because they did not grasp at any dharma, had their minds liberated from all outflows. All attained profound and subtle Dhyana concentration, the Three Clarities, the Six Penetrations, and perfected the Eight Liberations.

The second, third, and fourth times he set forth this Dharma, thousands of millions of *nayutas* of living beings, their numbers like the Ganges' sands, also because they did not grasp at any dharma, had their minds liberated from outflows. From that time onwards, the assembly of Hearers was unlimited, boundless, and unreckonable.

At that time the sixteen princes all left home as virgin youths and became Shramaneras. They all possessed sharp faculties and clear wisdom. They had already made offerings to hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of Buddhas, purely cultivating Brahman conduct, seeking *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*.

They all spoke to the Buddha, saying, "World Honored One, all these limitless thousands of myriads of millions of greatly virtuous Hearers already have reached accomplishment. World Honored One, you should, for our sake, also, speak the Dharma of *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*. Having heard it, we will all cultivate and study it. World Honored One, we all aspire to the Thus Come One's knowledge and vision. As to the thoughts deep within our minds, the Buddha himself knows."

Then, the multitudes, led by the Wheel-turning Sage King, eighty thousand million of them, upon seeing the sixteen princes leave home, also sought to leave home, and the king permitted them to do so.

At that time, the Buddha, having received the request of the sixteen Shramaneras, after twenty thousand *eons*, then at last, amidst the fourfold assembly, spoke the Great Vehicle Sutra by the name of the *Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower*, a dharma for instructing Bodhisattvas of whom the Buddha is protective and mindful. After he spoke the Sutra, the

sixteen Shramaneras, for the sake of *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*, all received, upheld and recited it and keenly penetrated its meaning.

When the sutra was spoken, the sixteen Bodhisattva-Shramaneras all received it with faith. Among the host of Hearers, too, there were those who had faith in it and understood it. The remaining thousands of myriads of millions of living beings, however, all gave rise to doubts.

The Buddha spoke this sutra for eighty thousand *eons* without cessation.

When he had finished speaking the Sutra, he entered a quiet room where he remained in *dhyana samadhi* for eighty-four thousand *eons*.

Then the sixteen Bodhisattva-Shramaneras, knowing that the Buddha had entered his room and was silently absorbed in *dhyana samadhi*, each ascended the Dharma seat. For a period of eighty-four thousand *eons*, for the sake of the fourfold assembly, they spoke the *Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra* extensively and in detail. Each one of them crossed over six hundred myriads of millions of *nayutas* of Ganges' sands of living beings, instructing them with the teaching, benefiting them, making them rejoice and causing them to bring forth the thought of *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*.

After eighty-four thousand *eons* had passed, the Buddha, Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory arose from samadhi, approached the Dharma throne and serenely sat down upon it. He addressed the great assembly, saying, "these sixteen Bodhisattva-Shramaneras are very rare. All their faculties are keen and their wisdom is clear. They have in the past already made offerings to limitless thousands of myriads of millions of Buddhas. In the presence of those Buddhas, they constantly cultivated Brahman conduct, accepting and upholding the Buddha's wisdom, instructing living beings and causing them to enter into it."

"You should all make a point of drawing near to and making offerings to them. Why? Those Hearers, Pratyekabuddhas, or Bodhisattvas who can have faith in the Dharma of the Sutra spoken by these sixteen Bodhisattvas, accept and uphold it without defaming it, will all attain *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*, that is, the wisdom of the Thus Come One."

The Buddha told the bhikshus, "These sixteen Bodhisattvas always delight in speaking the *Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra*. Each Bodhisattvas has transformed six hundred myriads of millions of *nayutas* of Ganges' sands of living beings who, life after life were born together with the Bodhisattvas and heard the Dharma from them, fully believing and understanding it. For this reason, they have met up with forty thousand millions of Buddhas, World Honored Ones and to this moment have not stopped doing so."

"Bhikshus, I will tell you, those disciples of the Buddha, the sixteen Shramaneras, have all now attained *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*, and in the lands of the ten directions, are presently speaking the Dharma. They have as their retinues limitless hundreds of thousands of millions of Bodhisattvas and Hearers.

Two have become Buddhas in the East. One is named Akshobhya, in the Land of Happiness. The other is named Sumeru Peak.

Two have become Buddhas in the Southeast. One is named Lion Sound. The other is named Lion Sign.

Two have become Buddhas in the South. One is named Space Dweller. The other is named Eternal Extinction.

Two have become Buddhas in the Southwest. One is named Royal Sign. The other is named Brahma Sign.

Two have become Buddhas in the West. One is named Amitayus. The other is named Savior of all Worlds from Suffering and Anguish.

Two have become Buddhas in the Northwest. One is named Tamalapatrachandana Fragrance and Spiritual Penetrations. The other is named Sumeru Sign.

Two have become Buddhas in the North. One is named Cloud Self-Mastery. The other is named King of Cloud Self-Mastery. In the Northeast there is a Buddha by the name of Destroyer of All Worldly Fear.

The other Buddha, the sixteenth, is myself, Shakyamuni Buddha, here in the Saha World, where I have realized *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*.”

“Bhikshus, we, as Shramaneras each taught and transformed limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions of Ganges’ sands of living beings, who, hearing the Dharma from us, were set towards *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*.”

“Of these living beings, there are those who dwell at the level of Hearers. I constantly instruct and transform them in *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*. All these people will, by means of this Dharma, gradually enter the Buddha Path. Why? The Thus Come One’s wisdom is hard to believe and hard to understand.

You were Bhikshus while I transformed living beings as limitless as Ganges sands who shall become disciples as Hearers after my extinction in the future.

After my extinction, furthermore, there will be disciples who will not hear this Sutra, who will not know or be aware of the Bodhisattva conduct, but who will, through the attainment of their own merit and virtue give rise to the thought of extinction and who will enter Nirvana. I shall be a Buddha in another land, with another name. Although these people will have produced the thought of extinction and enter into Nirvana, they will, in those lands, seek the Buddha’s wisdom and get to hear this Sutra and that it is only by means of the Buddha Vehicle that extinction can be attained. There are no other vehicles, except for those expedient devices taught by other Thus Come Ones.”

“Bhikshus, when the Thus Come One knows of himself, that the time of his Nirvana has come, that the assembly is pure, that their faith and understanding are solid and firm, that they fully comprehend the Dharma of emptiness and have deeply entered into *dhyana samadhi*, he will gather together the host of Bodhisattvas and Hearers and speak this Sutra for them, saying, “there are not two vehicles by which extinction is attained. There is only the

one Buddha Vehicle by which extinction can be attained.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bhikshus, the Thus Come One is also like this. He now acts as a great guide for all of you. He knows that living beings should leave and cross over the evil road of the torments of birth and death which is so steep, difficult and long. He shall respond to and save them.

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

He is like that guide, who, in order to give the travelers a rest, conjured up a great city. Then,

when they had rested, he told them, “the place of the jewels is near. This city is not real, but merely something I have conjured up.”

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

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

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

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

When ten eons had passed,  
He then realized the Buddha Way.  
All the gods and humans,  
Danced for the joy within their minds.

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

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

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

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

The Brahmas, seeing these signs,  
Followed them to the Buddha.  
They scattered flowers as an offering,



And offered up their palaces,  
Asking the Buddha to turn the Dharma-wheel,  
With verses in his praise.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Buddha, knowing the intentions of the youths,  
Their practices in former lives,  
Used limitless causes and conditions  
And various analogies,  
To reach them the Six Paramitas,  
As well as matters of spiritual penetrations.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Seeing those who seek the way,  
Exhausted in mid-course  
Unable to cross the dangerous paths,  
Of birth, death and affliction,  
Therefore, I use the power of expedients,  
To speak of Nirvana and give them a rest,  
Saying, “Your sufferings are ended.

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

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

For the sake of the Buddha’s All Wisdom,  
You should exert yourselves with great vigor.  
When you have certified to All Wisdom,  
And have the Ten Powers and other Buddhadharma  
And have perfected the thirty-two marks,  
Then that is genuine extinction.

The Buddhas, the guiding masters,  
Speak of Nirvana to give living beings rest,  
But once they know that they are rested,  
They lead them into the Buddhas' wisdom."

#### Verse In Summary

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

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

Amitabha! Na Mo Sakyamuni Buddha! After you go back, read this sutra again and again.  
Reading sutras is a beautiful time. I wish you all can enjoy reciting sutras and responding to  
the Buddha! Thank you! See you next week!

#### Verse of Transference

May the merit and virtue accrued from this work,  
Adorn the Buddhas' Pure Lands,  
Repaying four kinds of kindness above,  
And aiding those suffering those suffering in the paths below.

May those who see and hear of this,  
All bring forth the resolve for Bodhi.  
And when this retribution body is over,  
Be born together in ultimate bliss.