

Minwa-Fu Hokekyo Dowa

(Volume 24 of 30 Volumes)

by Rev. Kōge Matsumoto

The Flame Burning the Elbows and Body

Is a Fire in One's Mind

(This Sutra Is a Good Medicine for the Diseases of the People)

Chapter 1

The Heartfelt Appreciation and Returning a Favor

Are you doing all right? Do you listen to your parents, do you take care of your grandparents?

Sakyamuni Buddha and Nichiren Dai'Shonin were fond of children who took care of their parents and their elders. This chapter talks about appreciation and returning a favor. It is the story about Medicine-King Bodhisattva in his original home-world.

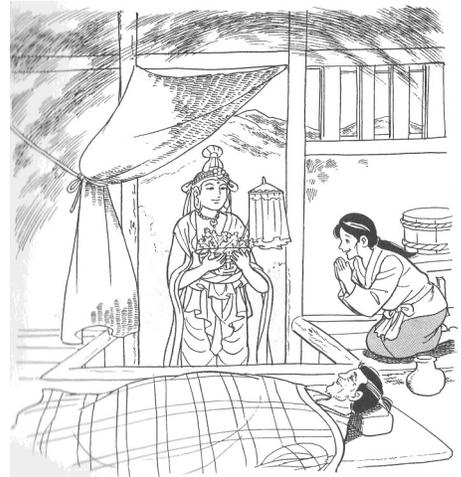
A) Practicing in Medicine-King Bodhisattva's Original Home-World

One day Star-King-Flower Bodhisattva who was one of Sakyamuni Buddha's disciples asked the Buddha:

“World-Honored one! I heard that Medicine-King Bodhisattva had practiced austerities for so many years. What kind of practices did he do? Tell us! We would be happy to hear about them.”

The Buddha remembered many of his practices in his previous lives.

Innumerable kalpas ago, there lived a Buddha called Sun-Moon-Pure-Bright-Virtue Tathagata. Since the Buddha always preached the teachings of the *Lotus Sutra*, his world was devoid of hellish people like those who always complained or were angry. The ground of his world was made of lapis lazuli and adorned with jeweled trees. Under the trees, disciples of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas sat and meditated.



Among them, Gladly-Seen-By-All-Beings Bodhisattva willingly practiced austerities under the Buddha. He walked about the world, strenuously seeking Buddhahood with all his heart. He wished to save people from any suffering with the special *samadhi* (concentration) by which he could transform himself freely into any living being.

Sun-Moon-Pure-Bright-Virtue Tathagata watched his disciple constantly with warm-hearted expectations.

B) The Bodhisattva Obtained the Supernatural Power

After twelve thousand years of practice, he at last obtained the *samadhi* by which he could transform himself into any other living being as he wished. He had great joy. He would now be able to save people from any suffering and make them happy by his supernatural powers. It was the bodhisattva returning a favor that he had received from the Buddha.

Of course, his master, Sun-Moon-Pure-Bright-Virtue Tathagata, must have been glad to see that. It is a great pleasure for parents and teachers when their children or students become brilliant. That is one of the ways to show appreciation to their parents and teachers.

Now, we shall study the story of Medicine-King Bodhisattva!

Chapter Two

Story of the Medicine-King Bodhisattva

As I told you before, Star-King-Flower Bodhisattva said to Sakyamuni Buddha:

“World-Honored One! Why does the great and virtuous Medicine-King Bodhisattva, who has eighty thousand great men as followers and who had a conversation with Sakyamuni Buddha in Chapter Ten (The Teacher of the Dharma of the *Lotus Sutra*), walk about on this Saha-World? This Medicine-King Bodhisattva might have had hundreds of thousands of austere practices in his previous existences. Oh, the Buddha! If you know some of them, please give us a few examples of his practices! All gods, men and nonhuman beings present here would be glad to hear them. Not only the members of this congregation who are here now but also other living beings like *asuras*, *yaksas* and *kimnaras*, who used to have fun threatening others, will be glad to hear them, so they may become protectors of the Buddha Dharma in the future! Please share his practices with us.”



Thus, Star-King-Flower Bodhisattva asked the Buddha about Medicine-King Bodhisattva’s practices in his past lives.

A) Expounding of the Dharma Started Now in This Volume

Sakyamuni Buddha’s exposition had ended in the preceding chapter of the sutra when the Buddha said, “May the Buddhas be where they wish to be! May the stupa of Many-Treasures Buddha be where it was! Expound the *Lotus Sutra* in your homeworlds!” There were still a great number who remained on Mt. Sacred Eagle. They had not yet left the assembly on Mt. Sacred Eagle. The stories of the remaining Bodhisattvas like Medicine-King, World-Voice-Perceiver and Wonderful-Adornment begin in this and the following chapters of the sutra.

So, the Buddha decided to talk about the past existences of Medicine-King Bodhisattva after they first made eye-contact with each other.

The Buddha praised Star-King-Flower Bodhisattva:

“Star-King-Flower Bodhisattva! You asked me a good question!”

C) Offerings with His Supernatural Power

Gladly-Seen-By-All-Beings Bodhisattva entered into the special *samdahi* (concentration) with his supernatural power. He filled the sky with clouds of lotus flower petals of red and white colors and the powder incense of the aromatic *candana* and rained down those flowers and incense. That incense was very precious and rare as it was grown on the shore of the southern tip of the sea. He offered all these things to the Buddha. These wonderful fragrances were smelled all over the Buddha-land.

Seeing these offerings by his disciple, Sun-Moon-Pure-Bright-Virtue Tathagata kept expounding the Dharma as usual with a gentle smile.

Having made these offerings to the Buddha, the Bodhisattva emerged from the deep concentration of his supernatural power, and thought, “I have now made offerings to the Buddha and the *Lotus Sutra*. But I feel these offerings are not enough to express my faithful acknowledgement to the Buddha.” He wondered what he should do. Then, he had a brilliant idea as follows:



Chapter 3

Offering His Own Body

“I have made offerings to the Buddha by my supernatural powers. But these offerings are less valuable than the offering of my own body!”

This chapter is a very important part of the *Lotus Sutra*, as it says the sutra is hard to believe and hard to understand. If you believe in the sutra literally, you will make a big mistake. Even if the Bodhisattva offered his own body by burning it, the sutra never encourages anyone to commit suicide or perform hard austerities.

You must keep in mind for sure that Sakyamuni Buddha always wished to save all living beings. Not only human beings but also all living beings. You must understand His deep insight and not the literal words.

A) Read the Insight of the Words

Even though your father gets mad at you and says, “Go to hell!” He does not mean it. Or in certain sports, fans may chant by words like “Burn, destroy, or kill” but they do not actually mean for the players to actually be burned or otherwise physically harmed. It is the same with the words in the *Lotus Sutra*.

The congregation on Mt. Sacred Eagle was there for a long time, so everyone understood the real meaning of the Buddha’s words by now.

The Bodhisattva said, “But these offerings are less valuable than the offering of my own body!” Then, Gladly-Seen-By-All-Beings Bodhisattva ate various kinds of incense, drank perfumed oil, applied perfumed oil to his skin, put it on his garments, and set fire to his body. The light of the flame of his burning body purified with all sorts of incense shone throughout the world for twelve hundred years.”

When many Nichiren Shu priests take *sui-gyo*, or water purification, early in the morning, they shout “Purify the six senses inside and outside!” They intend to purify the six sense organs and to make good use of their purified senses to cause happiness to their followers. Thus, Gladly-Seen-By-All-Beings Bodhisattva decided to burn his body to show his appreciation for the favor received from the Buddha.

The *Lotus Sutra* does not want you to burn yourself to show your appreciation to the Buddha. Instead, the burning flame is a symbol of intensive, straight-forward and long-lasting devotion to the Buddha.



B) Sweet Breath and Aromatic Sweat

Gladly-Seen-By-All-Beings Bodhisattva wished to purify all parts of his body with a good fragrance that soaked deep into each part of his body. Thus, the scent would penetrate the surrounding area of the Buddha by the Bodhisattvas sitting near by Him. Then, the congregation would smell the scent, and the people in the assembly would feel peaceful.

The Bodhisattva avoided eating all foods and drinks that produced bad smells but ate fruits and vegetables that produced good smells in order to purify his stomach for twelve hundred years. Then he ate various kinds of incense taken from *candana* and drank perfumed oils taken from the flowers that produced a good smell. He continued doing all of this for twelve hundred years.

Then he applied perfumed oil to his skin, put on a heavenly garment of treasures in the presence of Sun-Moon-Pure-Bright-Virtue Buddha, sprinkled various kinds of perfume on the garment, and set fire to his body to show his deep gratitude to the Buddha.

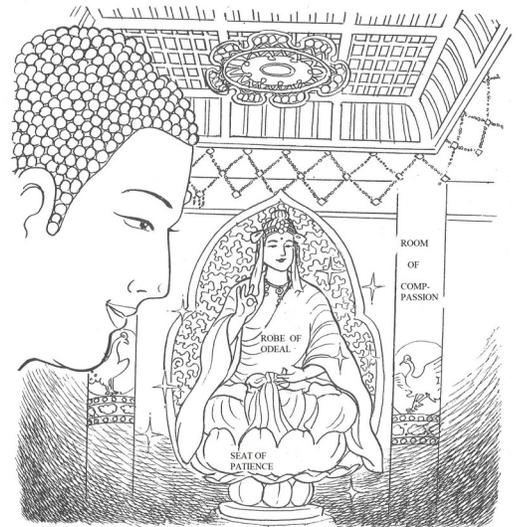
The light of the flame illuminated the worlds of the ten directions of the universe.

C) Offerings Robe, Seat and Room of the Buddha

Please recall The Teacher of The Dharma, Chapter Ten of the *Lotus Sutra*. Medicine-King Bodhisattva asked, “How should the good men or women who live after the Buddha’s extinction expound the *Lotus Sutra*?” Sakyamuni Buddha answered, “They should enter the room of the Buddha, wear the robe of the Buddha, sit on the seat of the Buddha, and then expound this sutra.”

To enter the room of the Buddha meant to have great compassion towards all living beings. To wear the robe of the Buddha meant to accept ordeal. To sit on the seat of the Buddha meant to be patient.

The Buddha tried to express the same things again here in the Primary Section (*Hon-mon*) of the *Lotus Sutra*; therefore, please do not take the words of the sutra literally. The garment of Gladly-Seen-By-All-Beings Bodhisattva symbolized overcoming any hardship for the sake of his master and the Dharma. The various kinds of perfumes symbolized patience to overcome any slander and scandal. He accepted slander and scandal as the evil that brightened his righteous conduct even more. With his garment he overcame hardship, the perfumes overcame slander and scandal, and the light of the flame was emitted equally to all of the worlds in the ten directions of the universe for twelve hundred years to express his gratitude.



D) Real Offertory Is the Flame of One's Mind

The light of Gladly-Seen-By-All-Beings Bodhisattva's pure mind toward the Buddha and the Dharma quenched the darkness and shone throughout the boundless universe. He proved that one's right prayers would illuminate the worlds and boundlessly reach everywhere.

The replica Buddhas in those worlds praised him and said simultaneously, "Excellent, excellent, good man! All you did was a true endeavor. You made an offering to the true Dharma. This offering excels any other kinds of things. Good man! This is the most excellent and honorable offering because you made it according to the Dharma."

I advise you to always give your heart and deep thought to the Buddha and Nichiren Dai'Shonin. This action is the best offering to them.

E) Real Offertory Is to Give One's Virtue to Others

Offertory is not limited to money. Nichiren Dai'Shonin said, "The highest offertory is to give one's virtue to others, the mid-level offertory is to listen to one's parents, and the lowest offertory is to give money." To give your heart felt devotion is the most honored offertory.

The body of the Bodhisattva kept burning for twelve hundred years, and then it was consumed. Having made this offering, Gladly-Seen-By-All-Beings Bodhisattva passed away. In his next life, because of his adoring devotion to the Buddha he appeared (by his wish) as the son of King Pure-Virtue in the same world of Sun-Moon-Pure-Bright-Virtue Buddha.

It is strange for us but that Buddha-world was devoid of women, hellish denizens, hungry spirits, animals and angry *asuras*. All living beings in that world appeared with their own supernatural powers of their wishes (not from being born from a mother and father). All people in that world had accumulated tremendous virtues of practices in their previous lives; therefore, they could understand everything after listening to just one word of the sutra.

F) Appearance by Means of One's Wish with Supernatural Power

Gladly-Seen-By-All-Beings Bodhisattva, who suddenly appeared with his supernatural power, in front of his father-king, King Pure-Virtue and said to him:

“Father, Great King! Know this, in my previous existence I walked about the world of Sun-Moon-Pure-Bright-Virtue Buddha, practiced the *Lotus Sutra* and finally obtained the supernatural power by which I could transform myself into any other living being according to my wish.”

He said to his father, “My master, Sun-Moon-Pure-Bright-Virtue Buddha is still alive. Although I appeared in front of you as your son, I wish to go to see the Buddha again and make another offering to the Buddha!”

Having said this, he sat on a platform of the seven treasures. The platform went up to the sky. He suddenly appeared in front of the Buddha who was staying in the sky, bowed to the Buddha, joined his palms together, and praised the Buddha in a gatha:

“Your face is most wonderful.
Your light illuminates the worlds of the ten quarters.
I once made offerings to you.
Now I am glad to see you again.”

The Buddha was also glad to see him again as He had been waiting for his appearance in person.

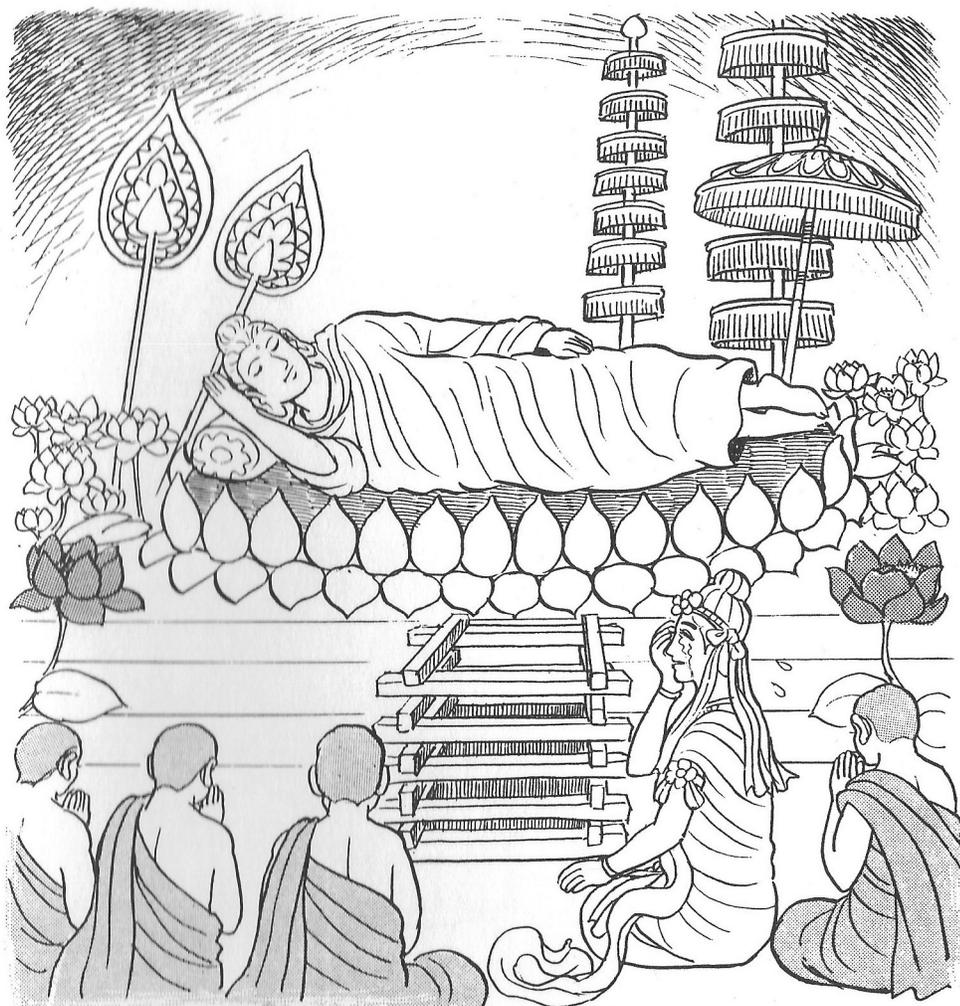


G) Reunion Becomes their Farewell

Sun-Moon-Pure-Bright-Virtue Buddha said to Gladly-Seen-By-All-Beings Bodhisattva:

“Good man, welcome back! The time of my extinction approaches after my lifespan of forty-two thousand *kalpas*. The time of my Nirvana is near at hand. Prepare me a comfortable couch! I shall enter into Pari-nirvana tonight.”

Gladly-Seen-By-All-Beings Bodhisattva had never thought of the farewell from his master Buddha so suddenly. He might have felt great sadness. But he wore the robe of gentle patience of the Buddha, sat on the seat of void-ness of the Buddha and entered the room of the great compassionate Buddha. So, he was able to overcome his sorrow. He adored the Buddha even more and felt responsibility to take care of his master’s body. He made a pyre of the *candana* incense tree grown on the shore of the sea, offered it to the dead body of the Buddha, and burned it. He did it all with the spirit of the *Lotus Sutra* for the Buddha.



Chapter 4

Offering by Burning His Elbows

On the verge of dying, Sun-Moon-Pure-Bright-Virtue Buddha instructed to the Bodhisattva:

“Good man! I will transmit all my teachings to you. I also will transmit to you all the Bodhisattvas and all the great disciples. I also will transmit to you the *sariras* (ashes) left after my extinction. Distribute my *sariras* far and wide and make offerings to them. Erect thousands of stupas to enshrine them!”

Following the Buddha’s last words, Gladly-Seen-By-All-Beings Bodhisattva aspired to keep the Buddha Dharma forever. After the Buddha’s body was burned, he collected his *sariras*. He made eighty-four thousand urns of treasures, and put the ashes therein. He erected eighty-four thousand stupas, and enshrined the urns therein. They were adorned with many treasures, streamers, and bells hanging down from the stupas. When wind hit the bells, the sound of the bells echoed and made the people adore Sun-Moon-Pure-Virtue Buddha.

After completion of the project to build the stupas and enshrine the ashes therein, he traveled to visit all these stupas to make offerings. He served the stupas just as he did toward the living Buddha. He also copied the *Lotus Sutra* over and over again, with a level of energy as if his arm might break in parts, in order to preserve the sutra for the future for a long time and keep the flame of the Dharma lit for seventy-two thousand years.



A) Don’t Worry, My Disciples!

Watching his continuous hard work of copying the sutra, all disciples of the Bodhisattva worried, “If our master continues to copy the sutra that strenuously, he may lose his arms.” But Gladly-Seen-By-All-Beings Bodhisattva smiled and told to his disciples not to worry about:

“Now I am making another offering to the *sariras* of Sun-Moon-Pure-Bright-

Virtue Buddha by copying the sutra. Do not worry about my arms! I shall be able to obtain the golden body of the Buddha because I gave up my arms. If my words are true and not false, I shall be able to have my arms restored.”

Having said this, he burned his arms adorned with the marks of one hundred merits, and offered the light of the flame to the eighty-four thousand stupas for seventy-two thousand years.

To burn his arms and body signified his intensive and straight forward devotion to the Buddha and the *Lotus Sutra*. It meant that in order to seek the truth and attain enlightenment of the universal truth, we must invest our whole energy in our goal. It did not mean to encourage suicide or hard sacrifices of our body at all.

B) Continue to Burn Energy for Three Generations

Thereupon Sakyamuni Buddha said to Star-King Flower Bodhisattvas:

“What do you think of this? Gladly-Seen-By-All-Beings Bodhisattva was no one but Medicine-King Bodhisattva of today. He gave up his body in this way, offered it to the Buddha, and repeated this offering many times. These were only a few examples.”

All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have past existences, just as we do. Because of yesterday, we are here today. Because of today, we will exist tomorrow. Nichiren Dai’Shonin said, “If you want to know your past, see yourself today. If you want to know about your future, see yourself today!” Every happening has a primary cause and sub-causes or conditions. Depending on the cause and condition, the result will become good or bad. Therefore, cause, condition and result are an unbroken relationship with the past, present and future. Please remember this relationship.

C) Because There Is Winter, Spring Comes

You must know that after a cold winter is, spring will surely come. No matter how defiled this world is or how cold people’s hearts are, someday Buddha’s compassionate teachings will light the world, the spring will come and beautiful flowers will bloom. It is important for these people who have a relationship with the Buddha Dharma to keep burning the flame



of their good hearts like the Bodhisattva's devotion to his master. It is important for you to pray for world peace always and endeavor to make the people understand the *Lotus Sutra* easily.

Thus, the Buddha said:

“Star-King-Flower Bodhisattva! Anyone who aspires to become a Buddha and wishes to attain enlightenment, should offer a light to the stupa of the Buddha by burning a finger or a toe. Then he will be given more merits than the person who offers all the treasures in the world.”

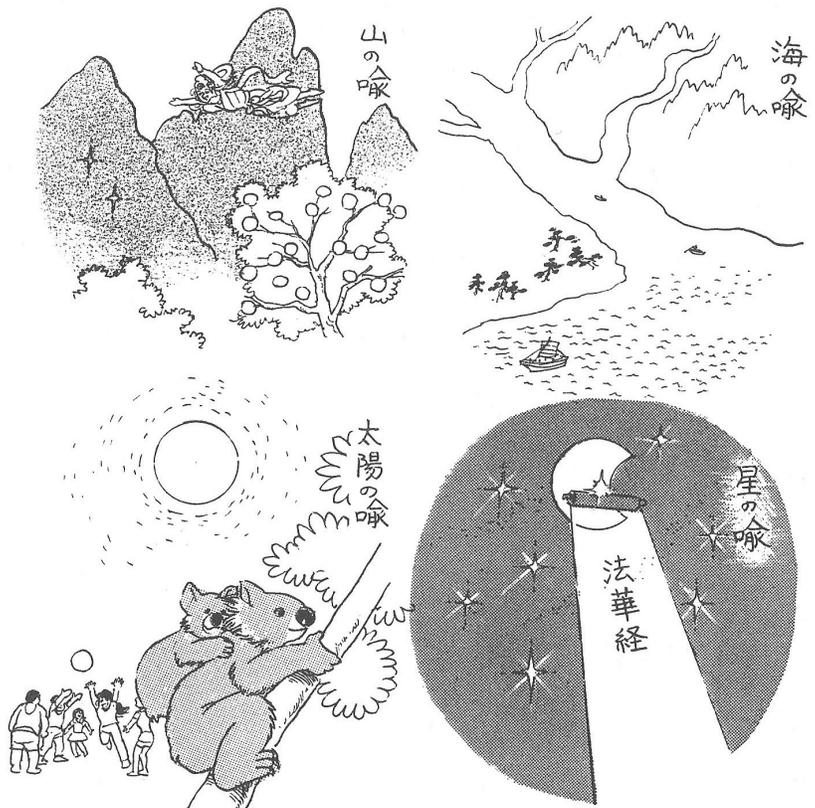
Then, the Buddha compared how precious the *Lotus Sutra* was to the ten other worldly matters as follows:

Chapter 5 The Dharma's Similarity with Various things

A) Examples in the Universe and Nature Around Us

First of all, just as all the water of streams and rivers flow to the ocean, all teachings of the Dharma flow into the compassionate sea of the *Lotus Sutra*.

Second, the mountain:
There are all kinds of mountains and hills around the world - ordinary mountains, rock mountains, mountains containing mines, herbs, fruits, many wild animals, or mountains dwelled upon human beings and angels. Among them, Mt. Sumeru, where angels dwell, is the largest of all. It is very beautiful with gold on the east side, silver on the west side, lapis lazuli on the south side and agate on the north side. The mountain is also sur-



rounded by seven oceans and seven mountains. Mount Sumeru is the tallest of all the mountains. Just like that, this *Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma* is above all the other sutras.

Third, the stars: The countless stars shine like diamond dust in the dark sky, but the light of the full moon brightens the night to look like a day time. Just as the moon is brightest of any stars, this sutra gives us more light than any of the other sutras.

Fourth, the sun: Just as the sun dispels all darkness and gives energy and life to all living beings, this sutra is the teachings of equality and great compassion that drive away all the darkness of evil.

B) Examples of Honorable Kings and Angels

Fifth, the kings: There are many kings depending on the size of their countries. Just as the wheel-turning-holy-king who gives happiness and world peace to all his people is superior to the kings of any country, this sutra is more honorable than the other sutras.

Sixth, the load of the gods: There are thirty-three heavenly gods such as Light, Offertory, As-wish, Daily-Practice, Golden-Palace, Wisdom, Superior-Practice, Pure and so on. They have different supernatural powers. Among them are King Sakra (god) supported by the Four Heavenly Kings of the East, the South, the West and the North. They vowed to protect the practitioners of the *Lotus Sutra*. Just as King Sakra is the King of the thirty-three gods, this sutra is the king of all sutras.



Seventh, the Great Brahman Heavenly-King: This god was said to be the creator in India. When Gautama Siddhartha attained Enlightenment, the creator was the first one who requested Sakyamuni Buddha expound what He had attained. Therefore, the Brahman Heavenly-King is the father-god for those who suffered from desire and passion in the triple world. Just as the Great Brahman Heavenly-King is the father of all living beings, this sutra is the father of all the sages and saints who quenched all worldly desires.

C) Such as the Bodhisattvas and the Buddha's Disciples

Eighth, the Sravakas and Pratyeka-buddhas: There were many disciples of Buddha such as those who had joined recently, those who had repeated the cycle of birth and death many times, those who still had a lot of desire, those who would not be born anymore called Arhats who had nothing more to learn and Pratyeka-buddhas who had attained the Dharma of the Dependent Origination. Just as the Pratyeka-buddhas were superior to other disciples, this sutra is superior to any other sutras.

Ninth, the Bodhisattvas: Just as Bodhisattvas were superior to Sravakas or Pratyeka-buddhas, this sutra is superior to any other sutra.

In the *mappo*-era, those who are able to have a relationship with the *Lotus Sutra* are very lucky among all other ordinary people. Why is that? It is because you are one of the Buddha's children who were born as Bodhisattvas from underground.

The tenth example that follows next is the merits of practicing the Buddha Dharma :

D) The Merits You Receive for Sure

It is said that there are eighty-four thousand teachings in the Buddha Dharma, but the *Lotus Sutra* is the great king of the kings among these teachings. You will be able to become a Buddha if you practice it honestly. The Eternal Buddha has dispatched His manifestation (replica) Buddhas to the ten directions of the universe, but only Sakyamuni Buddha who has the three virtues of the lord, master and father is able to lead the suffering people on this defiled and beautiful Saha-world. Just as the Buddha is the king of the Dharma, this sutra is the king of all the sutras.

Sakyamuni Buddha explained the above mentioned ten examples not only for the congregation at Mt. Sacred Eagle but also for the people who would expound the sutra in the *mappo*-era to obtain these merits. He encouraged us. The *Lotus Sutra* is full of such compassionate teachings.

Chapter 6

Buddha's Blessing Eliminates All Hardships

Thereupon the Buddha said:

“Star-King-Flower! This sutra saves all living beings.” This sutra saves them from all sufferings, and gives them great benefits.

The Buddha revealed the practice of Medicine-King Bodhisattvas under Sun-Moon-Pure-Bright-Virtue Buddha by the name of Gladly-Seen-By-All-Beings Bodhisattva in his original home-world:

- 1) Gladly-Seen-By-All-Beings Bodhisattva sought Buddha-hood strenuously with all his heart for twelve thousand years,
- 2) until at last he obtained the *samadhi* by which he could transform himself into any other living being.
- 3) Then, he filled the sky with clouds of various flowers and incenses and offered all these things to his master Buddha showing his appreciation.
- 4) But these offerings were less valuable, so he ate various kinds of incense and drank perfumed oil, then he applied more perfumed oil to his skin, put on a heavenly garment, sprinkled various kinds of perfumed oil on it and set fire to his body in the presence of the Buddha.
- 5) The light of the flame illuminated the worlds of the universe for twelve hundred years.
- 6) Having made these offerings, the body of the Bodhisattva passed away. In his next life, he appeared again to greet Sun-Moon-Pure-Bright-Virtue Buddha.
- 7) The Buddha transmitted all teachings and everything to him and requested him to prepare for His cremation since He would be extinct soon.
- 8) Overcome with sorrow, he made a pyre and burned the body of the Buddha after he passed away,
- 9) He collected the ashes and made eighty-four thousand urns and put the ashes therein.
- 10) He erected the same numbers of stupas and enshrined the urns therein. Many streamers, canopies and bells were hanging down from the stupas as offerings.
- 11) Since he was not satisfied with these offerings, he burned his arms to offer the

light of the flame to these stupas just as he did when the Buddha was still alive.

12) By doing so, he caused innumerable people to aspire for enlightenment.

13) Having seen him deprived of his arms, gods, men, asuras and others were full of sorrow.

14) The Bodhisattva vowed to the great multitude, “I shall obtain the golden body of the Buddha.” When he had made this vow, his arms were restored because his merits, virtues and wisdom were abundant.

To adore the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is always important and also to keep the *Lotus Sutra*, then you will obtain great benefits beyond our comprehension.

Beyond Our Comprehension

What kinds of benefits can we receive? The Buddha continued to say:

“Star-King-Flower! This sutra saves all living beings from sufferings, and gives them great benefits. For instance: just as a man who reaches a pond of fresh and pure spring water when he is very thirsty, he will revive his energy. Just as a man who obtains fire when he is freezing and his body is shaking. Just as a man who is given a garment when he is homeless and almost naked. Just as a merchant who finds customers. Just as a baby who is crying meets her mother. Just as a man who gets a ship when he wants to cross a river. Just as a patient who finds a physician. Just as a man who is given a light in the darkness. Just as a poor man who finds treasure. Just as the people of a nation in trouble who see a new compassionate king enthroned. Just as a trader who reaches the seacoast. Just as a torch dispels darkness, this Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma saves all living beings from all sufferings, from all diseases, and from all the bonds of birth and death.”

The teachings of the *Lotus Sutra* are beneficial to all living beings beyond our comprehension. The merits to be given to a person depend on how deeply he relates to the sutra or how strong his Buddha-nature is.

Therefore, you do not need to worry! When you adore the Eternal Buddha, Nichiren Dai’Shonin, (who is representing Superior-Practice Bodhisattva, the leader in the *Mappo*-era) and the *Lotus Sutra* (the One and Only Universal Truth), you will have nothing to be afraid of. Have a firm faith with an obedient mind and a strong determination.



Chapter 7

Amitayus Buddha and Sakyamuni Buddha

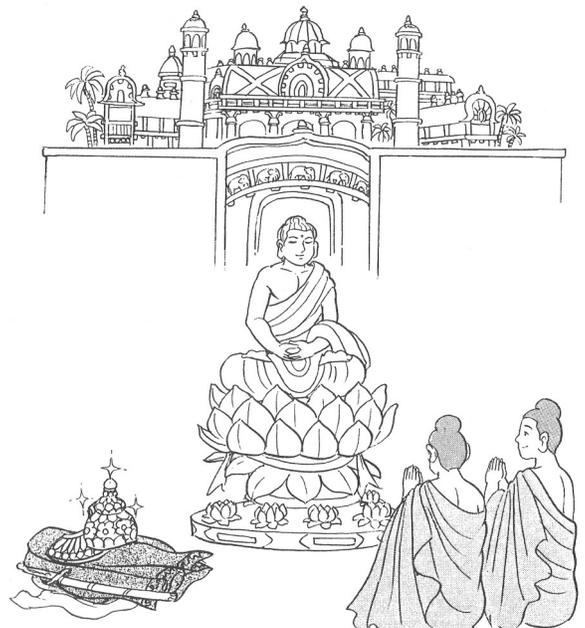
Do you still remember the name of Amitayus Buddha? His name appeared in Volume 8 (Chapter 7 of the *Lotus Sutra*, The Parable of a Magic City). He was the ninth of the sixteen princes of Great-Universal-Wisdom-Excellence Buddha. All of the princes renounced the world and practiced the teachings of the *Lotus Sutra* under their father. When their father, the Buddha had completed expounding this sutra, the Buddha entered a quiet room and practiced deep meditation. Seeing the Buddha enter into the room for meditation, the sixteen princes (now Bodhisattvas) each sat on a seat of the Dharma, expounded the *Lotus Sutra* and saved six hundred billion *nayutas* of living beings for eighty-four thousand kalpas.

The Buddha emerged from his meditation, sat quietly and said, “These sixteen Bodhisattvas are rare. They are now ready to expound the *Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dhamma*. Each of them taught six hundred billion *nayutas* of living beings. Each one of them went to the worlds of the ten directions of the universe. Those living beings were always accompanied by the Bodhisattvas by whom they were taught in their consecutive existences!”

Amitayus Bodhisattva was dispatched to the west together with his followers of six hundred billion *nayutas* of living beings, that is, as many living beings as there were sand particles in the River Ganges. He was assigned to his Pure-Land in the West and saved his people through the teachings of the *Lotus Sutra*. There he became the Buddha called Amitayus Tathagata.

It was the great compassion of the Eternal Buddha to save all living beings in the universe. The story of the magic city is an expedient about Amitayus Buddha who is a replica Buddha of the Eternal Buddha.

It is amazing that Amitayus Buddha appeared in this volume. Any word or any phrase in the *Lotus Sutra* could not be neglected.



A) To Save All Living Beings like Babies

The Eternal Buddha always sees all living beings with great compassion. There is no difference in good or bad, white or black, a gentle or rough child, and the wise or unwise. They are all so cute to the Buddha, just like new born babies. He knows there are some people who grieve because of slumping business or lament from heart break. Their worry is like a baby crying for the Buddha. He wishes to save them all by using expedients.

The Buddha taught the main important subjects at the assembly in the sky. But from this volume, The Previous Life of Medicine-King Bodhisattva, it was the last assembly on Mt. Sacred Eagle. From this section, the Buddha revealed some expedients especially for females.

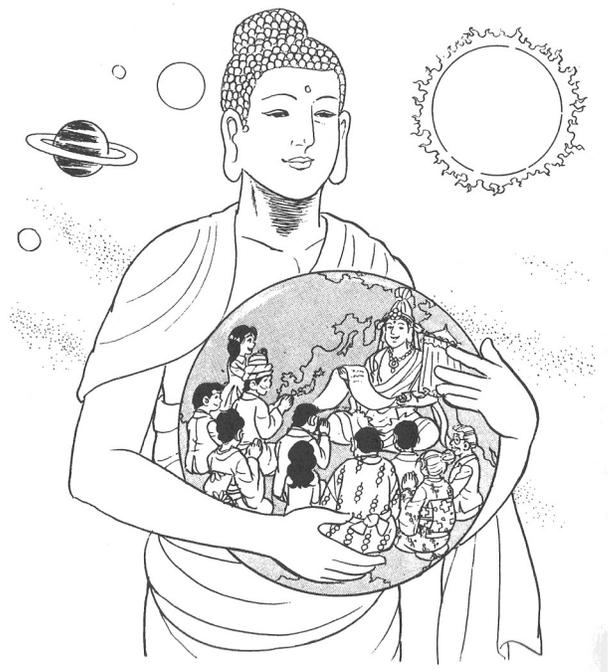
B) Compassion towards Women Especially

The Buddha said that the woman who hears The Previous Life of Medicine-King Bodhisattva of the *Lotus Sutra* and has faith in it will not need to be reborn in this world.

“Star-King-Flower Bodhisattva! She who hears this sutra and acts according to the teachings of it in the latter five hundred years after my extinction, will be able to be reborn, after her life in this world, on the jeweled seat in the lotus flower blooming in the World of Happiness where Amitayus Buddha lives. She will not be troubled by greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, jealousy, or any other impurity. She will be able to obtain the supernatural powers of a Bodhisattva and the truth of birthless-ness. When she obtains this truth, her eyes will be purified. With her purified eyes, she will be able to see the reality of all things.”

Thus, the Buddha said gently and compassionately.

While He was speaking, Sakyamuni Buddha might have thought about His mother, Queen Maya, His step-mother, Maha-Prajapati, and His wife, Yasodhara. He thought to save all living beings even at the cost of His own life.



C) Amitayus Buddha and the Universe Are a Part of the Eternal Buddha

We are in midst of the *mappo*-era now. All manifestation Buddhas in the ten directions of the universe and the universe itself are in the midst of the breast of the Eternal Buddha. In other words, the universe is within this Saha-world, and the great universe is within everyone's mind. Therefore, everyone's mind is equipped with the doctrines of the Three Thousand Existences in One Thought, The Ten Realms in One's Mind, and the Ten Such-ness.

The expounder of the *Lotus Sutra* in the Mappo-era must know that Sakyamuni Buddha's golden words were spoken out of His great compassion, and His words also exist within our minds.

D) The Pure-Land and the Saha-World Are at One's Wish

Sakyamuni Buddha said that a woman who hears this sutra and acts according to the teachings of the sutra will be able to be reborn on the jeweled seat in the lotus flower blooming in the World of Happiness where Amitayus Buddha lives. What do you think about the World of Happiness?

Does a woman really want to do nothing except eat and sleep day after day in Amitayus Buddha's World? Does she want everything she wishes to appear instantly in the Pure-Land?

Or does she want to do the cooking, sweeping and washing for her family even if she does not have enough time to eat or sleep? She may enjoy wanting little and knowing contentment. She may enjoy doing things for others. Which do you prefer? You'd better choose whatever you wish to do because a happy world or a hard life-style is all within your mind.

But please do not forget to burn the flame of adoration for the *Lotus Sutra*.

Chapter 8

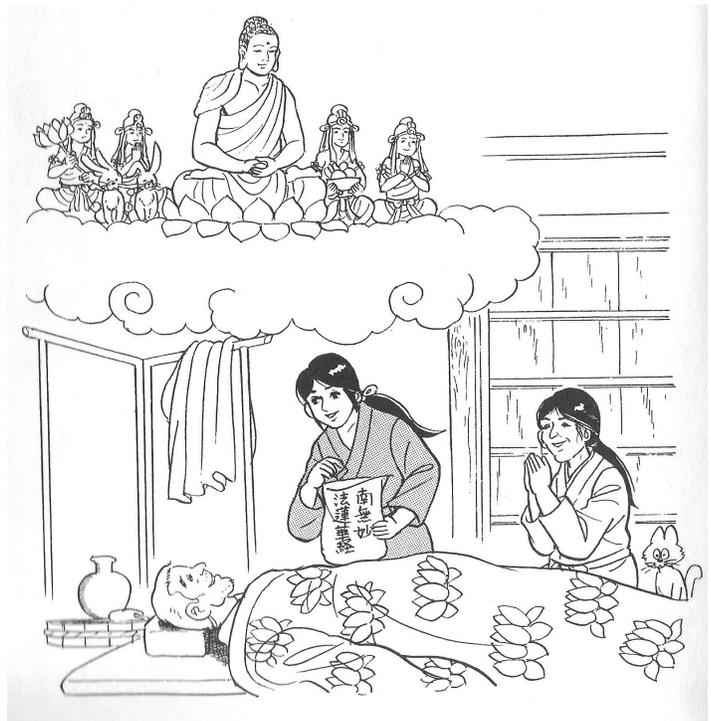
This Sutra Is a Good Medicine for All Patients

At last Sakyamuni Buddha declared a very important message:

“Star-King-Flower Bodhisattva! I will transmit this chapter of The Previous Life of Medicine-King Bodhisattva to you. Propagate this chapter throughout the worlds in the latter five hundred years after My extinction lest it should be lost, and lest the evils should take advantage of the weak points of the people of the worlds.”

“Protect this sutra by your supernatural powers! Why is that? It is because this sutra is a good medicine for the diseases of the people of the worlds. The patient who hears this sutra will be cured of his disease at once. He will not grow old or die.”

“The latter five hundred years after My extinction” means twenty-five hundred years after the death of Sakyamuni Buddha. Nichiren Dai’Shonin took this time period as very important for his propagation. He wrote in his most important doctrines in *A Treatise Revealing the Spiritual Contemplation and the Object of Worship for the First Time in the Fifth 500-year Period after the Death of Sakyamuni Buddha* or *Kanjin Honzon-Sho*.



A) Make the Patient Take the good medicine

The Buddha said, “This sutra is a good medicine for the diseases of the people of the worlds.”

There was a similar phrase in Chapter 16 of the *Lotus Sutra*, “I am leaving this good medicine here. Take it! Do not be afraid that you will not be cured!” Thus, He had declared it when the Buddha revealed the existence of the Eternal Buddha in the chapter. He said it again in this chapter of The Previous Life of Medicine-King Bo-

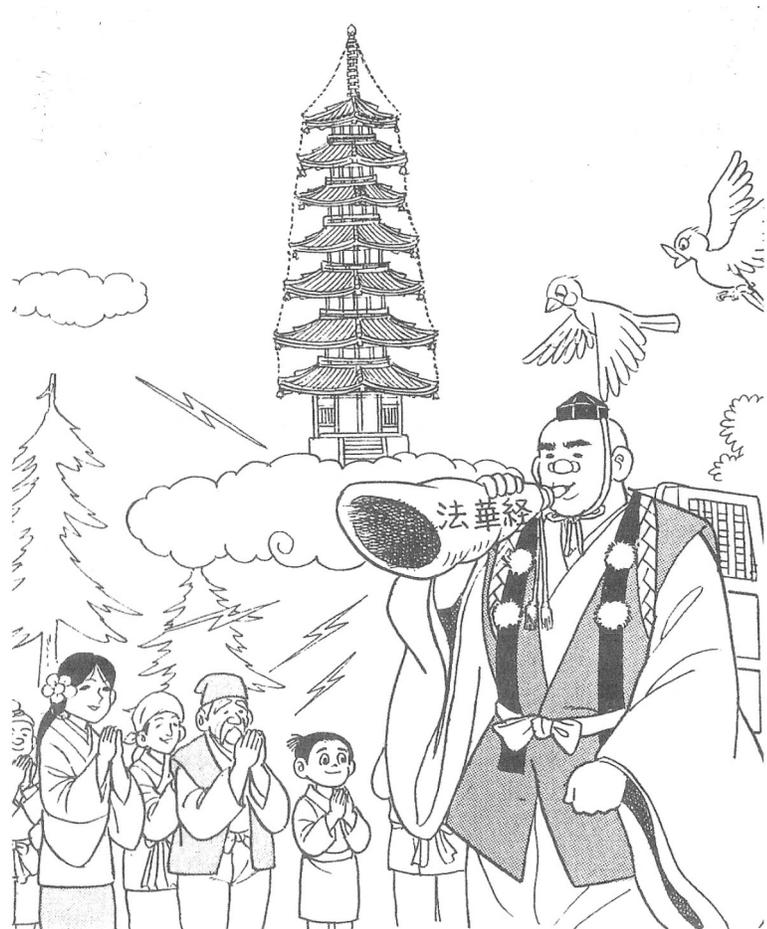
dhisattva.

The Buddha said, “He (the expounder of the *Lotus Sutra* in the *Mappo*-era) will blow the conch-shell horn of the Dharma, beat the drum of the great Dharma, and save all living beings from the ocean of old age, disease and death.”

When you read these sentences, you will realize that the *Lotus Sutra* is not for salvation and rejoicing only for yourself but for all living beings. Therefore, the real practitioner of the *Lotus Sutra* must have a strong determination to expound the sutra by blowing the conch-shell horn of the Dharma and beating the drum of the great Dharma to save all living beings from the ocean of old age, disease and death.”

At the end of the chapter of The Previous Life of Medicine-King Bodhisattva, Many-Treasures Tathagata in the stupa of the treasures praised Star-King-Flower Bodhisattva, saying:

“Excellent, excellent, Star-King-Flower! You obtained inconceivable merits. You asked this question to Sakyamuni Buddha, and benefited innumerable living beings.”



B) Keep the Light of the Flame

All right!

The flame burning the Bodhisattva's body and elbows represented the Bodhisattva's appreciation of the Buddha and the *Lotus Sutra*!

Do not get attached to the words of the burning of his body and arms but focus on what it represents. The light of the flame offered to the Buddha and the Dharma by the Bodhisattva was to show his heart felt appreciation.

Keep the ten similarities of the Dharma and the benefits by practicing the Dharma in your mind.

Blow the conch-shell and beat the drum to expound the Dharma with a determination strong enough as if you could change stone to gold.

Pray for yourself to meet the *Lotus Sutra* again in your next life.

Do not misunderstand!

Do not waste your precious life!

The Buddha does not encourage you to practice asceticism!

Wish to be born to meet the *Lotus Sutra* life after life!

So, you will become a Buddha!

The Buddha expounded the Dharma in various ways and words!

Try to recall what the original vow you made in your original home-world was!