

**SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTERS OF THE LOTUS SUTRA  
BY JEFF MCDANIEL  
PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA**

The following is a review of the first fourteen chapters of the Lotus Sutra based on "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra" (DLS) which just completed serialization in *Living Buddhism* last month. The fifty-three installments of the dialogue appeared in the magazine from April 1995 to October 2000. The series is being published in book form as *The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra* (Volume One is now available.) The dialogue was conducted between SGI President Daisaku Ikeda and representatives of the Soka Gakkai Study Department, Katsuji Saito, Takanori Endo and Haruo Suda. With the fresh look at the Lotus Sutra they have provided for the past five years, the relevance of this ancient teaching to our times has been made clear.

A crucial point to keep in mind is the recurring theme of the "oneness of mentor and disciple." It is woven throughout the dialogue in a rich discourse that freely pulls in Lotus Sutra text, revelatory passages from Nichiren Daishonin's writings and wonderful images of correct Buddhist understanding from Josei Toda.

We must be mindful not to lose the opportunity to approach the Lotus Sutra afresh, armed with the illuminating and encouraging perspective of the "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra." Therefore we will begin with a summary of the introductory portions of the dialogue. (The installment numbers pertaining to each chapter of the sutra follow the title)

**INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES: "THE WISDOM OF THE LOTUS SUTRA—  
A DISCUSSION ON RELIGION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY  
(DLS-1,2,3)**

The dialogue participants take a look at the reality of human life and the earth's environment at the close of the twentieth century. They view the situation as dire, noting the lack of influence that a single person can have on events in the world. They trace the crisis facing humanity to the loss of a functional life philosophy. President Ikeda states:

Some people say that the prevailing mood in the world today is one of powerlessness. Whatever the case may be, we are all aware that things cannot continue as they are. Yet decisions about political, economic and environmental issues all seem to be made somewhere beyond our reach. What can the individual accomplish in the face of the huge institutions that run our world? This feeling of powerlessness fuels a vicious cycle that only worsens the situation and people's sense of futility. (*Seikyo Times*, April 1995, p. 37)

Among the participants, there is no hesitation to declare the need for a fundamental change in what humans believe is of the highest value. They point out that it is the Lotus Sutra that provides the fundamental insight that life itself is what is most precious.

President Ikeda contrasts the hopelessness of the present age with the power that can be manifested based upon actualizing the core teaching of the Lotus Sutra:

At the opposite extreme of this sense of powerlessness lie the Lotus Sutra's philosophy of a single life-moment encompassing three thousand realms<sup>1</sup> and the application of

this teaching to our daily lives. The principle of one life-moment containing three thousand realms teaches us that the inner determination of one individual can transform everything. It is a teaching that gives ultimate expression to the infinite potential and dignity inherent in the life of each human being. (*Seikyo Times*, April 1995, p. 37)

They discuss the difference between knowledge and wisdom. Teachings with the power to truly change each person and the total environment cannot be transmitted as if moving Wall Street stocks. Thus, President Ikeda introduces the theme of mentor and disciple which will be the linchpin of many of the episodes, principles and truths in the chapters of the Lotus Sutra:

Though knowledge can be transmitted from one person to another, wisdom cannot. The only way to develop wisdom is to acquire it through personal experience. That is one reason the Lotus Sutra places such strong emphasis on the teacher-disciple relationship, a relationship that demands a total commitment by both parties. (*Seikyo Times*, April 1995, p. 42)

Reaffirming the propagation of the Lotus Sutra as the means for all beings to attain absolute happiness, the participants realize that one of the purposes of the dialogue is to communicate the “wisdom” of the Lotus Sutra that will touch the hearts of all people.

Nichiren Daishonin expounded the very essence of the Lotus Sutra, so studying the Lotus Sutra is the same as studying the Daishonin’s teachings. By the same token, studying the Daishonin’s teachings leads to an understanding of the Lotus Sutra. They are like two sides of one coin. Consequently, when we discuss the Lotus Sutra, we are not simply studying the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. We are undertaking the far more challenging task of exploring the Daishonin’s teachings with our sights set on the far-distant future. (August 1995, *Seikyo Times*, p. 6)

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION (DLS–4,5)

This is the opening chapter of the Lotus Sutra and begins, as most sutras do, with the phrase “This is What I Heard.”

The congregation is introduced with Eagle Peak as the setting. There is a vast assembly of bodhisattvas, *arhats*,<sup>2</sup> people of the two vehicles, humans, kings, gods, animal-beings, demons and other creatures. The Buddha is attended by tens of thousands of disciples and attainees of various levels of illumination. The sutra reports that Shakyamuni preached the Sutra of Infinite Meaning and then entered a deep meditation called “the Samadhi of the place of immeasurable meanings.”

There is a discussion among representative bodhisattvas of the great diversity of the assembly that has gathered amidst the wonderful phenomena unfolding while the Buddha is in deep meditation. They are in agreement that these are all omens that the Lotus Sutra is to be preached. Likewise, we have to look for deeper portents for our own lives as we read the Lotus Sutra. President Ikeda asks us to be mindful that events are unfolding on many levels.

Mr. Toda didn’t want to make the Lotus Sutra some fanciful story divorced from reality, or Buddhism some kind of abstraction. Moreover, he was absolutely

convinced the Lotus Sutra and Buddhism were neither of those things. He knew for a fact that the Lotus Sutra was the Law of life, the Law existing in the depths of one's own being.

It is a movie on a truly colossal scale with the whole universe as its screen. The entire cosmos is the stage of the Lotus Sutra, and all Buddhas have attained their enlightenment based on the Mystic Law. It is the Lotus Sutra, which reveals this one fundamental Law—the Mystic Law. As a prelude to the presentation of this great Law, a variety of startling omens occur. (*Seikyo Times*, September 1995, p. 23)

In the introduction, the leading bodhisattvas shared their experiences of the Lotus Sutra being preached many times in the past in varying forms. In this milieu, they compare and correlate the many appearances of Buddhas and the different forms in which the Lotus Sutra was expounded. This is embraced by the term “universal Lotus Sutra.”

The ultimate truth is one, but it is expressed in many forms. Yet all of them are the Lotus Sutra. The universal Lotus Sutra is the teaching in which the Buddha reveals and makes accessible to all people the Law that he himself has become enlightened to, the Law for attaining Buddhahood, so that all may achieve true happiness and ease. (*Seikyo Times*, September 1995, p. 25)

Following this, they turn their attention to the opening phrase, “This is what I heard” or “Thus I heard.” As always, with our study of the Lotus Sutra, we learn that the shortest of utterances can be laden with deep meanings. The dialogue participants delve into the full significance of “This Is What I Heard.” On Eagle Peak in 475 BCE, Shakyamuni's audience was primarily disciples called “voice-hearers.” As a monk or nun, the person was on a path in the realm of learning. It was Shakyamuni's goal to have these disciples become self-motivated to transform themselves into bodhisattvas and act with the Buddha's compassion.

In the sutra text, “This is what I heard” refers to the words of the disciple Ananda who was a personal attendant to Shakyamuni, always present listening to the Buddha's preaching. We have already learned that there are multiple levels on which to interpret the teaching. President Ikeda explains:

The Daishonin is applying the principle of “text, “meaning” and “intent” for reading the sutra. “Text” refers to the sutra's literal content. “Meaning” indicates the doctrine or principle to which the text refers. When we restrict ourselves to examining only the literal text of the scripture, we can only get as far as its “meaning.”

But no amount of discussion of the “text and meaning” of the Lotus Sutra will be truly valuable unless we get to its heart, or true “intent.” The Daishonin comes to the conclusion that “‘The substance of a doctrine’ indicates Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 709).

We are not to read the sutra as something separate from ourselves. Instead, we should “hear” it “as it applies to our own self” and “as the very Law of our own life.” (*Seikyo Times*, September 1995, p. 27–28)

President Ikeda goes on to clarify that the most profound connection passing through “This is what I heard” is the bond of mentor and disciple:

The essence of “This is what I heard” is the oneness of mentor and disciple, and that is the quintessence of the transmission of Buddhism.

The drama of the oneness of mentor and disciple, in which there is a mutual resonance and response between the Buddha's wish to save all living things and the wish of the disciple who seeks to embody and propagate the Buddha's teaching, is epitomized in this phrase, "This is what I heard." (*Seikyo Times*, September 1995, p. 28)

## CHAPTER TWO: EXPEDIENT MEANS (DLS-6, 7,8, 9)

The "Expedient Means" chapter is the most important chapter in the first half (chapters 1-14) of the Lotus Sutra. The beginning of the chapter explains that Buddha wisdom can only be understood by Buddhas and clarifies the reason for the advent of a Buddha into a world to "open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings."

After this statement from Shakyamuni Buddha, Shariputra entreats him to explain further. The Buddha refuses because of the potential for slander among those who will reject the sutra. After the third entreaty, the Buddha agrees to preach this wonderful sutra. The core of the revelation by Shakyamuni is that up to this point in his teachings, there had been three vehicles or modes of self-development: the worlds of learning, realization, and bodhisattva. The Buddha rejects this notion and states that there is only one vehicle, Buddhahood. Reaffirming this several times, Shakyamuni explains how rare it is for someone to be able to hear about the One Vehicle.

The point of "Expedient Means" is that these are teaching devices intended to lead the listener to an expanded understanding. Even more, the transformation that is needed is one of actually awakening one's heart to genuine compassion and then struggling to develop the courage to act upon it. The "Expedient Means" is the perfect educational method for showing people how to reveal their own Buddha nature. President Ikeda states:

In the "Expedient Means" chapter, Shakyamuni says, "I have, through various causes and various similes, widely expounded my teachings" (LS2, 24). The Buddha employs different causes and different similes depending on his audience to lead them to the right path. This ability of the Buddha is called "the power of expedient means." It is the ability to know precisely what to teach each individual at any given moment.

In other words, it is the ability to perceive the precise state of being of each individual and the wisdom to select the most appropriate teaching for that person. It is also the power of compassion that seeks to nurture each and every person so that they may attain Buddhahood. The source of all these abilities and powers is the profound and immeasurable Buddha wisdom. (*Seikyo Times*, December 1995, p. 11)

The "Expedient Means" chapter holds the deeper revelation of the secret and mystic expedient. It refers to the fact that it is only known and understood by Buddhas that all living beings are themselves Buddhas. In terms of the Ten Worlds, the world of Buddhahood is hidden in the lives of people of the nine worlds. All of the sufferings of the nine worlds act as the ideal motivating force for our Buddhist practice to attain Buddhahood. There is an interdependent relationship that Buddhahood would not be an actuality unless there are the other nine worlds.

The "Expedient Means" chapter also contains the building blocks for the principle of "three thousand realms in a single moment of life."

## CHAPTER THREE: SIMILE AND PARABLE (DLS-10)

In this chapter, we find the figure of Shariputra dancing with joy, having made a breakthrough listening to the “Expedient Means” chapter from which he “gained something I never had before.” This is the realization that he will attain Buddhahood. However, there are still leading disciples and others present that have not yet realized this. Therefore, Shariputra asks the Buddha for more clarification about the three vehicles that have now become the One Vehicle. The Buddha responds by telling the “Parable of the Three Carts and the Burning House.” A father returns to find his children are at play in a large house that is filled with danger and is on fire. The children are so engrossed in their play that they do not heed his warnings. To lure them from these dire straits, the father promises them three special ox carts if they will come outside to safety. When the children are eventually enticed out of the burning house they see that their father has provided one huge “Great White Ox cart” that is described in the unique blend of superlatives and details that characterize the Lotus Sutra.

This parable is an obvious metaphor for the principle of the replacement of the three vehicles of learning, realization and bodhisattva with the One Vehicle of Buddhahood. This particular parable is the first of seven parables in the Lotus Sutra. It is described in prose and then restated in verse, the longest section of poetry in the entire sutra. As President Ikeda states:

Living beings, submerged in foolishness and ignorance, not only fail to recognize that the house in which they dwell is actually burning up with them inside it, but they also fail to realize that their very own lives contain the Buddha’s life. Using parables, the Buddha seeks to awaken them to the brilliantly shining life inside them. (*Seikyo Times*, July 1996, p. 23)

The distinctive features of the many parables such as the “Phantom City” or the “Gem in the Robe” have struck chords in millions of hearts, making the Lotus Sutra one of the most widely disseminated books in the world. However, the parables have greater meaning than a simple story. President Ikeda explains:

Simply hearing the Buddha’s skillful parables and similes and declaring, “Yes, I understand!” does not constitute a full understanding. Truly profound understanding results in a transformation of one’s entire being. By its very nature, understanding entails a transformation. As one rises to a higher state of being, wisdom is born. That is why the disciples who heard and truly understood the Buddha’s teachings were then able to speak in parables themselves. (*Seikyo Times*, July 1996, pp. 28-29)

The true significance of the parables in the Lotus Sutra is that they are “identical to the Entity of the Law.” The parables are likened to our experiences in practicing Buddhism:

The same applies to us. Our individual experiences of triumphing over our problems give courage and hope to many others. The story of our personal victory, in other words, becomes a parable expressing the power of the Mystic Law. And those who hear our experience can share it with still others.

Mr. Makiguchi started the Soka Gakkai’s discussion meeting movement, which centers on members sharing their experiences in faith with others. He taught the Mystic Law not in the form of difficult abstract theories but through easily intelligible

personal experiences.

Each individual experience is a parable of the all-pervading Mystic Law. And the discussion meeting, based on sharing such personal experiences, is a contemporary representation of the “Simile and Parable” chapter, a modern version of the seven parables of the Lotus Sutra, an infinite treasury of parables.

Parables are wisdom and compassion distilled to their most fragrant essence. The Soka Gakkai initiated a revolution in the way Buddhism is spread by adopting the same method as the Lotus Sutra. The spirit of the Lotus Sutra’s parables lives on in the sixty-five-year history of the Soka Gakkai [Ed. note: now seventy years]. And we will continue to write the brilliant story of the widespread propagation of the Lotus Sutra (Nam-myoho-renge-kyo) day after day, a story that will be passed down through eternal future generations. (*Seikyo Times*, July 1996, p. 31)

## CHAPTER FOUR: BELIEF AND UNDERSTANDING (DLS–11)

Now that Shakyamuni has expounded the “Parable of the Burning House,” more than just Shariputra dance with the joy of knowing that they too will be able to attain Buddhahood. The fruit of faith is shared among the four great men of learning: Subhuti, Katyayana, Mahakashyapa, and Maudgalyayana. After taking faith in the one Buddha vehicle and further spreading this “belief and understanding,” all four communicate “The Parable of the Wealthy Man and his Son.” This is the story of the wayward son being recognized by his father and lured back to his home. The son does not recognize his father and is content to labor humbly as a manure cleaner in the stables for twenty years. Eventually, he develops self-respect through his consistent efforts and is able to inherit his father’s land and property. This is a parable that shows how we have forgotten our own roots of the Buddha life within. It also shows how the Buddha uses compassion through expedient means to lead the seeker to the true identity that he or she has always possessed. This chapter gives clear credence to the principle that we must gain entrance to the one Buddha vehicle through faith.

The important point is the fundamental issues for Buddhism of faith and wisdom, and faith and liberation (enlightenment), are distilled in the words “belief and understanding.” In a broader sense, this relates to the universal issues of civilization and philosophy and reason, and belief and knowledge. This is an extremely delicate problem, with relevance to many disciplines, including the cognitive sciences and psychology. Buddhism has traditionally considered these issues in meticulous detail. (*Seikyo Times*, August 1996, p. 33)

For those of us who practice in the Latter Day of the Law, it is our own Buddha nature of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo deep in our life. Through our experience, we have learned that our faith and practice do not free us from difficulties. Our faith is not a kind of external scaffolding that holds together a weak human being. President Ikeda explains:

The belief taught in the Lotus Sutra provides for no easy answers, no escape route from the difficulties of human life. In fact, it rejects such easy answers; instead it implores us to take up the two tools for exploring life, belief and understanding, and use them to continually challenge and work to perfect ourselves. And it also provides us with the energy to do just that. (*Seikyo Times*, August 1996, p. 41)

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE PARABLE OF THE MEDICINAL HERBS (DLS–12)

Following the “Parable of the Rich Man’s Son,” Shakyamuni praises the four great men of learning for their understanding of how the Buddha employs the most appropriate expedient means to lead everyone to enlightenment. To provide further elucidation about the Buddha’s compassion for all sentient and non-sentient beings, Shakyamuni preaches yet another wonderful parable. This is the one for which the chapter is named. The story begins with a description of thick clouds covering the world and raining down equally on all parts of earth. All trees, bushes, grasses, and medicinal herbs receive the same amount of moisture regardless of stature. Each plant, regardless of its diversity, benefits equally from the rain. Shakyamuni equates the “Thus Come One” who preaches the one Buddha vehicle to the rain that causes this single Wonderful Law to be heard by all so that they can attain absolute happiness.

And even within so great a work of religious literature as the Lotus Sutra, the parable of the three kinds of medicinal herbs and two kinds of trees holds a unique interest. Among the seven parables of the Lotus Sutra, it alone emphasizes the diversity of living beings. And through this emphasis, it highlights the equality of the Buddha’s compassion. (*Seikyo Times*, September 1996, p. 21)

From the perspective of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism what can we learn about this parable that will strengthen our faith and practice? Certainly we can use the sutra’s story to fortify the conclusion that each of us is a unique being. Also, we have seen from what we have encountered so far, that the function of the “secret mystic expedient” of the Buddha of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, is to lead us in our own unique way to the same state of life. Furthermore, as Bodhisattvas of the Earth in the SGI, we must extend this same opportunity to everyone. As President Ikeda puts it at the conclusion of the dialogue for this chapter:

I quote and discuss Nichiren Daishonin’s writings out of the desire to convey to the entire world the supreme humanity, the vast and immense state of life of the Daishonin who declared, “The various sufferings of all human kind are the sufferings of the one person Nichiren” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 758).

In the parable of the “Medicinal Herbs” chapter, it says that the great cloud of the Buddha’s compassion “covers” the entire thousand-million fold world, that is, the entire universe. How can we cause the immense love and compassion of the original Buddha to rain down upon the entire world? This is the thought that constantly occupies my mind; this is my constant determination. (*Seikyo Times*, September 1996, p. 31)

## CHAPTER SIX: BESTOWAL OF PROPHECY (DLS–13)

There have been several parables told and many members of the audience have come to acknowledge the one Buddha vehicle. They have also realized that the purpose of the skillful means the Buddha employed was to allow them to advance along the Buddha Way. At this juncture, Shakyamuni makes the prediction of the enlightenment of one of the foremost men of learning, Mahakashyapa. He will be named Buddha Light Bright. The sutra extols in text and verses the beauty and wonder of the realm-to-be of Buddha Light Bright. The other men of learning, who have come to know the error of their ways, harbor doubts that they too could attain this same goal. Shakyamuni does not keep them in

suspense for too long. He then makes a prophecy that his senior disciples will become Buddhas and gives the names of those Buddhas. At the end of the chapter, Shakyamuni issues the prophecy that all of the disciples in the world of learning will reach Buddhahood in the future.

This is a remarkable occurrence and can be likened to the sun coming out in the middle of the night. In all the previous Buddhist sutras, the goal for the worlds of learning, realization, and even the early bodhisattva path had not included the goal of actually attaining Buddhahood. Those who had placed their faith in the two vehicles and were not awakened to the one Buddha vehicle (as revealed in the Lotus Sutra) were not able to even make the journey. Within the context of all of Shakyamuni's teachings, this sutra is nothing short of revolutionary. For this reason, all the disciples danced with joy.

There are some additional lessons to be learned from the "Bestowal of Prophecy." It is important that we encourage our fellow human beings in concrete and effective ways. President Ikeda explains it from the intent of Shakyamuni when he made the prophecies, and how we can interpret them in our interaction with fellow SGI members:

The "Bestowal of Prophecy" has the effect of removing the sense of unease the disciples had felt in the depths of their lives and giving them profound peace of mind. Through the "Bestowal of Prophecy," which is the Buddha's assurance they will ultimately attain Buddhahood, they gain profound confidence in the future. (*Seikyo Times*, October 1996, p. 22)

Originally, "bestowal of prophecy" meant giving a clear reply, and so resolving the doubts in people's hearts. Leaders should always speak with forthrightness and clarity. Vagueness is bad, because it causes people to feel uneasy. Giving people confidence is the key point in the "bestowal of prophecy." (*Seikyo Times*, October 1996, pp. 21-22)

As mentioned, the prophecy of the Buddha for the men of learning comes with a glowing description of the era and land in which that particular disciple will dwell upon attaining Buddhahood. The images of the particular realm and time of these specific Buddhas reflect the character of each disciple as it will be manifested in their respective lives and Buddha lands. Summing up the significance of this similarity, President Ikeda states:

The important point here is that, upon attaining Buddhahood, the personality and total life experience of each of these disciples come to shine as virtuous enlightened attributes. As long as we have faith, no effort is wasted. This is the great benefit of the Lotus Sutra. (*Seikyo Times*, October 1996, p. 25)

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: THE PARABLE OF THE PHANTOM CITY (DLS-14)**

Even though there remain some disciples of learning and others that still do not get the basic message, with chapter seven we see a shift in the Buddha's preaching. It is almost as if he is preparing the audience for what is to come. Even so, he once more evokes a restatement of the replacement of the three vehicles by the one Buddha vehicle. He does this through the story of the "Parable of the Phantom City."

Even before the story, there is the implicit revealing of the extensive karmic bond shared with his disciples since *sanzen-jintengo* (an immensely long period of time). He used this very long period of time to set the stage for talking about a Buddha called Victorious Through Great Penetrating Wisdom.

To portray this unimaginable length of time since Victorious Through Great Penetrating Wisdom existed, Shakyamuni uses the image of grinding the mass of *sanzen* worlds into dust particles to be used as counters for *jintengo*. These are sand-grain *kalpas*, often figured as nearly sixteen million years. Thus, Shakyamuni was able to cause his listeners' minds to try to grasp the immensely vast time-and-space perspective of the Buddha life.

Before entering the way of Buddhist practice, Great Universal Wisdom Excellence Buddha was a worldly king with sixteen sons. He left secular life to seek Buddhahood. It took a long time to complete this journey. After his attainment of Buddhahood, his sixteen sons, their families and millions of heavenly and wheel-turning kings beseeched Victorious Through Great Penetrating Wisdom Buddha to teach the true Dharma, the Lotus Sutra. He grants their request and preaches the whole cycle of sutras. Finally, he preaches the Lotus Sutra for eight *kalpas*. Following this, his sixteen sons teach and propagate the Lotus Sutra to all the beings in many worlds. They cause untold numbers of these beings to seek the Buddha Way. He establishes the connection of these interdependent living beings and gathers with the disciples to hear the Lotus Sutra with the indelibly gripping statement, "After that Buddha had passed into extinction, those persons who had heard the Law dwelled here and there in various Buddha lands, constantly reborn in company with their teachers." (LS7, 140) Earlier in the text portion, Shakyamuni recounts the whole saga of Great Universal Wisdom Excellence Buddha and his sixteen sons who had all been converted by their father, engaged in bodhisattva practice, and finally attained perfect enlightenment in their own respective Buddha lands. Shakyamuni explains that he was the sixteenth son and that is why he is there on Eagle Peak preaching to the assembled multitudes of human and non-human beings.

Shakyamuni repeats his declaration that his previous teachings of the multiple vehicles are to be replaced with the one Buddha vehicle. Through the true entity of life revealed in the second chapter, all beings are capable of attaining Buddhahood. And that the one Buddha vehicle is the correct path to enlightenment. Shakyamuni uses the "Parable of the Phantom City" to allow his listeners to grasp this truth through evocative images. It is the story of a band of travelers on a tough journey in the wilderness with their guide. The travelers are on foot seeking a land reputed to be filled with treasure. It is a long way off and the journey is more dangerous and exhausting than they had expected. The band is close to giving up the quest. Sensing this and caring for their welfare, the guide uses his supernatural powers to create the illusion of an opulent city where the travelers can rest and gain sustenance. The disheartened band is overjoyed to see this city. When they have recovered their vitality, the guide dissolves the illusory city. He explains that they are resuming their journey to the real land of treasure, which is not far away.

Following the telling of the parable, Shakyamuni explains that the guide is actually the Buddha. The phantom city represents the three vehicles. They are an expedient means to lead people to their true destination, the one Buddha vehicle. Had the Buddha announced the true goal from the very outset, his followers would have balked at taking the journey. Thus, the conjured city is but a waystation to the real goal. The illusion is so good that the travelers seeing it in the distance make the strong effort to reach it and feel that they have attained something. It is through such ways that the Buddha employs skillful means.

From the perspective of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, there is the necessity of redefining the journey that is undertaken. The potential for Buddhahood exists at the core of our life. The practice of faith in the Gohonzon and the study of Buddhism is to reveal Buddhahood within. Then how do we look at the journey to the treasure land and the

phantom city? President Ikeda explains it from the perspective of Buddhahood and the nine worlds:

From the text of the Lotus Sutra, we gather that the leader makes the phantom city disappear and that they then proceed to the treasure land. But Nichiren Daishonin goes beyond this interpretation, explaining that the phantom city and the treasure land, rather than being distinct, are in fact inseparable. (*Seikyo Times*, December 1996, p. 29)

If the world of Buddhahood is the end or objective, then the nine worlds become the process leading to it. The view that we only arrive at Buddhahood after escaping the nine worlds implies discontinuity between the nine worlds and the world of Buddhahood—in other words, that the nine worlds do not contain the world of Buddhahood, and vice versa. But as indicated in the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," provisional, pre-Lotus Sutra teachings embrace the idea that we only attain enlightenment after eradicating the three categories of illusion (illusions of thought and desire, illusions innumerable as particles of dust and sand, and illusions about the true nature of existence).

Shakyamuni's true intention in expounding the Lotus Sutra was to clarify that the nine worlds contain the world of Buddhahood and the expedient means are themselves the truth. Accordingly, the phantom city and the treasure land are not separate or distinct. The phantom city is identical to the treasure land.

From this perspective, the process is, in actuality, the end. In other words the attainment of Buddhahood is not a destination at the end of the road of Buddhist practice. Rather, the actions of someone who practices and spreads Buddhism are themselves the actions of the Buddha. (*Seikyo Times*, December 1996, pp. 29–30)

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: PROPHECY OF ENLIGHTENMENT FOR FIVE HUNDRED DISCIPLES (DLS–15)**

Considerable excitement was generated by Shakyamuni's explanation of his connection to past lifetimes and to the disciples present at the preaching of the Lotus Sutra on Eagle Peak. Of the category of "voice hearers," (people of learning) the leading disciples Purna, Ananda, Rahula, and others perceive the true intent of the Buddha and the significance of the one Buddha vehicle. Purna was known for great eloquence, as he became the leader in preaching the Law. He approaches, bows and addresses Shakyamuni:

The World Honored One is very extraordinary, very special, his actions rarely to be encountered! Adapting himself to the various natures of the people of this world and employing expedient means and insight, he preaches the Law for them, drawing living beings away from their greed and attachment to this or that. The Buddha's blessings are such that we cannot set them forth in words. Only the Buddha, the World Honored One, is capable of knowing the wish that we have had deep in our hearts from the start. (LS8, 144)

Hearing Purna's speech, the Buddha praises his steadfast efforts to preach the Law and to never bring attention to himself. He makes the prediction that Purna will eventually become a Buddha called Law Bright Thus Come One. Shakyamuni described the magnificent Buddha lands that his life will bring forth. Furthermore, there were five hundred *arhats* that also received a prophecy of enlightenment.

The promise of enlightenment to the voice-hearers in the “Prophecy of Enlightenment for Five Hundred Disciples” chapter is very significant. When they realize the correctness of the teaching of the one Buddha vehicle, they awaken their compassion to share this teaching and its joy to many other people. Speaking about Shakyamuni’s intent in preaching the Lotus Sutra, President Ikeda comments:

But the Buddha’s true intention was not contained in the Hinayana. The Buddha did not want his disciples to wind up being merely people who seek to be led to salvation, and so he expounded the Lotus Sutra, which clarifies his true intention.

What you should seek, he tells the voice-hearers, is not the enlightenment of the Hinayana but the wisdom of the Buddha. He is saying in effect: “I want to enable all people to gain the Buddha’s wisdom and raise their state of life so that they can freely lead others to happiness just as the Buddha does.” This is the Buddha’s true intention. (*Living Buddhism*, January 1997, pp. 40-41)

It was for this reason that Shakyamuni praised Purna. From the text it is apparent that the other voice-hearers—who were direct disciples of Shakyamuni—were able to learn from Purna’s example and the compassion of their mentor that they achieve the same inner reform. To demonstrate their understanding of what they have gained, they tell the parable of the gem in the robe. The story tells of a poor man who visits an old friend. He is treated with food and drink. Overcome by the wine, he falls asleep. Needing to leave on an errand, his host worries about the condition of his destitute friend. So he sews a priceless gem in the beggar’s coat. Awakening and finding his friend is not around, the poor man departs the house. Unaware of the wonderful gem in his tattered robe, he wanders from land to land remaining in dire circumstances. One day, the poor man again encounters his old friend. The friend is shocked that the poor man had not made use of the priceless gem that he sewed in his friend’s robe so many years ago. He cuts open the robe and reveals the shining gem within. His life-weary friend is overjoyed to learn that he is in possession of such a treasure.

The nature of the priceless jewel is that we be determined to seek out comprehensive wisdom, that we desire to attain Buddhahood. The dialogue on the sutra participants refer to the voice-hearers’ realization from the “Phantom City” chapter that they have been connected with Shakyamuni since the remote past of *sanzen jintengo*. This brings forth another meaning of the gem as the priceless treasure that the Buddha, as the poor man’s “good friend,” had implanted in their lives so long ago. As President Ikeda states:

They return to their “true selves.” This is the “awakening of the voice-hearers.” They wake up from the “drunken stupor of darkness” (that is, ignorance about the true nature of their lives).

A key word here is “recollect.” They return to their own prime point. They perceive the Law that is the wellspring of their own lives. It is a matter of “returning to the self.” It was the stupor of “darkness” that had caused them to forget this. (*Living Buddhism*, January 1997, p. 47)

## **CHAPTER NINE: PROPHECIES CONFERRED ON LEARNERS AND ADEPTS (DLS–15)**

There are two remaining direct disciples of Shakyamuni that have not yet received a prophecy of enlightenment. They are his cousin, Ananda, and his son, Rahula. They both

approach the Buddha to ask what the future holds for them. Shakyamuni does not delay. He first confers a prophecy of future Buddhahood on Ananda who gave up his life among royalty to follow Shakyamuni and become his personal attendant. Because he was always with the Buddha, he became known as the foremost in “hearing the Buddha’s teachings.” Those are his words at the beginning of the Lotus Sutra, “This is what I heard.” Shakyamuni says that he will become Mountain Sea Unrestricted Power King Thus Come One.

Rahula, his son, was always seeking and learning from Shakyamuni’s elder disciples. He never tried to stand on his relationship as Shakyamuni’s son. His reputation became that of “foremost in inconspicuous observance of the precepts.” Shakyamuni says he will become Stepping On Seven Treasure Flowers Thus Come One.

Along with the assurances of enlightenment for Ananda and Rahula, come similar prophecies for two thousand other voice-hearers who ranged from *arhats* to those who were just beginning to learn the Buddhist teachings. President Ikeda explains that this prediction is meant to include all people:

As I have mentioned before, the spirit of bestowal of prophecy upon the voice-hearers is that of the bestowal of prophecy on all people. The promise of enlightenment does not apply only to the voice-hearers; all people can attain Buddhahood. All people can inherit the Buddha’s wisdom and be capable of leading others to happiness. This idea is indicated in the prophecy of enlightenment upon all voice-hearers, in which no distinction is made between arhats, learners, and adepts. (*Living Buddhism*, January 1997, p. 43)

## CHAPTER TEN: TEACHER OF THE LAW (DLS–16)

With this chapter, the sutra progresses beyond the events and parables of the past nine chapters that were aimed at thoroughly revolutionizing the minds of the disciples of learning and realization. Now these disciples are at the congregation as bodhisattvas. Another eighty thousand great bodhisattvas come from the far corners of the universe to hear the Lotus Sutra. The chapter begins with Shakyamuni’s documentation of the benefit to be received by any man or woman who upholds and teaches the Lotus Sutra after his death.

Including the assembled multitudes, Shakyamuni addresses Bodhisattva Medicine King with a number of critical statements that reflect the high status of the Lotus in his teachings.

The sutras I have preached number immeasurable thousands, ten thousands, millions. Among the sutras I have preached, now preach and will preach, this Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand. Medicine King, this sutra is the storehouse of the secret crux of the Buddhas. (LS10, 164)

Shakyamuni also focuses on both the inestimable value and the difficulty of teaching and spreading the Lotus Sutra in the future. He explains that those who take on this great task will be people of pure and selfless hearts that will forestall the great rewards of their virtuous deeds in order to continue to help people attain the Buddha Way.

If one of these good men or good women in the time after I have passed into extinction is able to secretly expound the Lotus Sutra to one person, even a phrase of

it, then you should know that he or she is the envoy of the Thus Come One. (LS10, 162)

It must not be distributed or recklessly transmitted to others. It has been guarded by the Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, and from times past until now has never been openly expounded. And since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing? (LS10, 164)

The dialogue on the sutra participants agree that the “Teacher of the Law” chapter is oriented towards propagation in the future. As we progress, the entire flow of the sutra turns into a mighty river of guidance and encouragement about how to practice, propagate and study the true reality of Buddhism in the ages to come. The dialogue points out that this chapter is an answer to the question that was posed at the beginning of the dialogue concerning “an age lacking philosophy.” President Ikeda states that the “Teacher of the Law” chapter paints the portrait of the kind of people that will appear in the “age of darkness”. There is a dual thrust of the “Teacher of the Law” chapter. It states that a person who accepts the Law as their master becomes “a seeker of the way” as well as the teacher who spreads the Law.” President Ikeda comments:

Teachers of the Law unite both of these qualities in themselves. To forget the “seeking” side is to become arrogant; to forget the “saving” side is to become self-centered. While continuing to deepen their own understanding, teachers of the Law lead others to happiness; and through helping others become happy, they further deepen their understanding. Seeking the Law is itself leading others to enlightenment; and leading others to enlightenment is itself seeking the Law. Herein lies the supreme path of life. (*Living Buddhism*, February 1997, pp. 24-25)

The concluding part of the chapter deals in more detail with propagation of the Law after the Buddha’s passing.

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE EMERGENCE OF THE TREASURE TOWER (DLS-17, 18)**

The descriptions in this chapter spare nothing in their superlatives. How else can the event of a world-sized, jewel-encrusted tower emerging from the earth be portrayed? Through the manifestation of the Treasure Tower and the voice of Many Treasures Thus Come One speaking from within and the elevation of the entire congregation, the scene dramatically shifts from the rocky crags of Eagle Peak to a setting in another dimension called the “Ceremony in the Air.”

As the massive structure arose from the earth, a strong voice speaks from within the tower:

“Excellent, excellent! Shakyamuni, World Honored One, that you can take the great wisdom of equality, a Law to instruct the bodhisattvas, guarded and kept in mind by the Buddhas, the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, and preach it for the sake of the great assembly! It is as you say, as you say. Shakyamuni, World Honored One, all that you have expounded is the truth.” (LS11, 171)

While the sight was truly awe-inspiring, it created questions and doubts in the minds of many in the assembly. Therefore, a bodhisattva named Great Joy of Preaching asked

Shakyamuni about the significance of the tower emerging and the voice coming from within. He replies that the tower is in fact the “complete body of the Thus Come One” (LS11, 171). He tells of the existence of Many Treasures Thus Come One, who has traveled from a remote place in the universe as he said he would to verify the truth of the Lotus Sutra whenever it is preached.

Following this, Shakyamuni performs the unparalleled feat of illuminating countless Buddha lands in all directions, revealing an incalculable number of Buddhas, each with their own retinues of great bodhisattvas who are journeying to partake in the ceremony. Once everyone is in attendance, Shakyamuni rises up from his seat and opens the treasure tower. Many Treasures Buddha again declares the veracity of Shakyamuni’s teaching and asks him to take the seat at the top next to him. So that everyone else can participate, Shakyamuni elevates the entire assembly to equal height with the Treasure Tower.

There have been many efforts to interpret this event. The great tower is seen by many Buddhist scholars to be an image portraying Shakyamuni’s enlightenment. The Ceremony in the Air described in the “Emergence of the Treasure Tower” chapter is also an expression of the Buddha’s compassion to strive with all his might to communicate the state of the enlightenment to all sentient beings. As President Ikeda states, we need to also see this same state of life within ourselves:

Mr. Toda taught us clearly what the Treasure Tower is and the significance of its emergence. That colossal Treasure Tower is an expression of the state of Buddhahood that lies dormant within each of us. It teaches us the infinite nobility of life.

Indeed, there is perhaps no more fitting way to express the eternal and limitless state of Buddhahood than by using the Ceremony in the Air—a setting that breaks free of all boundaries of time and space. (*Seikyo Times*, November 1995, pp. 6–7)

Once everything is in place, Shakyamuni exhorts the assembly with the question of who will propagate the Lotus Sutra after his passing? He asks all present to make a great vow for propagation. To show the difficulty of carrying out this mission, he sets out the “Six Difficult and Nine Easy Acts.” It is a lopsided contrast of nine of the most incredible feats such as hurling Mount Sumeru across the universe, with the difficulty of having faith in and teaching the Lotus Sutra.

Are we to be left with the wonder of this tremendous entity floating in space, surrounded by innumerable hosts of heavenly, human and non-human beings? How can this image be incorporated as a functional part of our lives as practitioners of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism? In discussing the first chapter, President Ikeda asks that the dialogue participants explain the principle of the “Three Assemblies in Two Places.” The participants first examine the chapter-by-chapter flow of the Lotus Sutra. The portion beginning with the “Introduction” (first) chapter and ending with “The Teacher of the Law” (tenth) chapter takes place on Eagle Peak. At the very beginning of “The Emergence of the Treasure Tower” (eleventh) chapter, this enormous edifice suddenly erupts from the earth and rises into the air as does the entire assembly. This Ceremony in the Air continues until the “Entrustment” (twenty-second) chapter. From the “Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King” (twenty-third) chapter, the scene returns to Eagle Peak and remains there through the last chapter. This is the source of the designation, the “Three Assemblies in Two Places.” While Eagle Peak is an actual place where Shakyamuni preached his teachings, the Ceremony in the Air transcends ordinary reality. President Ikeda follows this up with his own perspective:

The progression from the assembly at Eagle Peak to the Ceremony in the Air and then back to Eagle Peak parallels the movement from reality to the state of enlightenment and then back to reality. Or, to be more accurate, it is a flow from reality prior to enlightenment, to the state of enlightenment, and then to reality after enlightenment. (*Seikyo Times*, November 1995, p. 7)

To “rise into the air” means to elevate our state of life through our determined and unwavering faith. This is the significance that pertains to the sutra’s progression from the first assembly on Eagle Peak to the Ceremony in the Air. (*Seikyo Times*, November 1995, p. 8)

From real life to the Ceremony in the Air and then back to real life—in this continuous process back and forth lies the path of human revolution, the path of transforming our state of life from one motivated by the Lesser Self to one inspired by the Greater Self. In life, we must not permit ourselves to be totally absorbed with only immediate realities. We must have ideals and strive to achieve them, thereby transcending present realities. On the other hand, we must not allow ourselves to become alienated from reality. We can change nothing unless our feet are firmly planted on the ground. (*Seikyo Times*, November 1995, pp. 8-9)

The important thing is that we act out the “three assemblies in two places” in our daily lives. Nichiren Daishonin used the Ceremony in the Air to express his own enlightenment in the form of the Gohonzon. We, who embrace the Gohonzon, are manifesting the dynamism of the Lotus Sutra directly in our lives. (*Seikyo Times*, November 1995, p. 13)

When we devote our lives to the propagation of the Mystic Law, the present moment is always one with eternity. Eternity and the present moment meet, interact and reverberate in harmonious unity in our daily lives. Our lives are a continuous stream of joy—a manifestation of eternity in the present moment. Therefore, to a person of faith, a single moment is not just a single moment, a day is not just a day. Each moment, each day, has an eternity of value packed into it. The more time passes, the more each moment, each day, shines with a golden light. (*Seikyo Times*, November 1995, p. 6)

## **CHAPTER TWELVE: DEVADATTA (DLS–19, 20)**

The “Devadatta” chapter contains some very important lessons of the power of the Lotus Sutra to enable the enlightenment of all life forms as well as a person of great evil. As the chapter opens Shakyamuni relates the story of a king in the distant past who desired to find the truth of Buddhism. He encountered a hermit who said that he possessed the teaching of the Lotus Sutra. In return for the king’s service he would share it with the king. For a thousand years the king served the hermit. Shakyamuni states:

The Buddha said to the monks: “The king at that time was I myself, and the seer was the man who is now Devadatta. All because Devadatta was a good friend to me, I was able to become fully endowed with the six paramitas, with pity, compassion, joy, and indifference, with the thirty two features, the eighty characteristics, the purple-tinged golden color, the ten powers, the four kinds of fearlessness, the four methods of winning people, the eighteen unshared properties, and the transcendental properties and the power of the way. The fact that I have attained impartial and correct enlightenment and can save living beings on a broad scale is all due to Devadatta, who was a good friend.” (LS12, 184)

Of course this was not the image of Devadatta in the earlier sutras. He was the jealous cousin of Shakyamuni who became the enemy of the Buddha, attempting to take his life and disrupt the Buddhist order. However, the participants in the “Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra” look deeper at the nature of good and evil as demonstrated by Shakyamuni and Devadatta. Most certainly, Shakyamuni pointed out to Devadatta the error of his ways. President Ikeda says that evil cannot be reformed if it is not challenged:

If evil functions to reveal good, then evil in its entirety becomes good. This is truly the oneness of good and evil. But if evil is simply allowed to run its course, then it does not become good. Only when evil is thoroughly challenged and conquered does it become an entity of the oneness of good and evil.

In that sense the enlightenment of evil people presented in the “Devadatta” chapter is great proof of the victory won by Shakyamuni. It is his “victory declaration.” Only when he stands in this lofty state of a winner can he say that Devadatta had in a past life been a good friend and mentor, and had in this life aided his efforts to instruct people. (*Living Buddhism*, June 1997, p. 31)

The next revelation is that of the Dragon King’s daughter demonstrating the ability to quickly attain supreme enlightenment. Bodhisattva Manjushri returns from the palace of the Dragon King where he explains that he bears actual proof of someone who has been able to engage in a practice that quickly leads to the highest state of life. There is doubt on the part of those present, since they have been taught that Shakyamuni attained Buddhahood only after immeasurable kalpas of arduous practices. Manjushri presents the dragon girl. Her offering of a priceless gem to Shakyamuni out of profound appreciation and her subsequent ability to quickly attain perfect enlightenment wins over the hearts of all who are present. Through actual proof she overthrows the prejudices in their mind about the access to enlightenment for all beings. They have a renewed hope that Buddhahood is not something far off in the distance, but is within their reach in the present moment.

The participants in the dialogue on the sutra point out that the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra, which contains the “Devadatta” chapter, was especially popular in Japan when the Lotus Sutra was first brought from China. President Ikeda shares Nichiren Dai-shonin’s view of its importance:

Regarding the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Daishonin says: “The fifth volume presents what is the heart and core of the entire sutra, the doctrine of attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form” (MW-930). There are, of course, many other important chapters, but the Daishonin says that the “Devadatta” chapter represents the very heart and core of the entire sutra, suggesting that this chapter is the key to the principle of attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form.

The spirit of the Lotus Sutra is to enable all people to become Buddhas. For ordinary people, the simple fact of whether one can attain Buddhahood or not is a matter of far keener importance than any doctrine. And the “Devadatta” chapter certainly offers a straightforward reply to that question. (*Living Buddhism*, June 1997, p. 24)

Through the concrete example of Devadatta and the dragon girl becoming Buddhas, people could accept this teaching not merely as theory, but as actual fact. (*Ibid.*, p. 31)

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN: ENCOURAGING DEVOTION (DLS–21)

This chapter contains Shakyamuni’s strong admonition to everyone in attendance at the Ceremony in the Air to uphold the Lotus Sutra even at a time of great opposition. The monks, nuns, *arhats*, and bodhisattvas all respond with many vows and oaths saying, “We beg you World Honored One, to have no further worry. After the Buddha has entered extinction we will honor, embrace, read, recite, and preach this sutra.” (LS13, 190)

The fervor to take on propagation reaches a high point with the entire congregation issuing forth a magnificent lion’s roar of commitment to embrace and spread the Lotus Sutra in the evil times to come when people have lost their seeking spirit for the truth and the Buddha way. They recite a litany of the type of opposition from demons and even worse persecutions they will face in taking on this daunting goal. In the verse section is the famous declaration “In order to preach this sutra we will bear these difficult things. We care nothing for our bodies or lives but are anxious only for the unsurpassed way.” (LS13, 194-195)

In the dialogue on the sutra, the participants engage in an extensive discussion of the "Three Powerful Enemies." How they function in society for their own power and gain while draining the vitality of the people, creating confusion in the world of human spirituality. For this reason, it is essential to have a strong commitment to Buddhist practice and a bond with a correct teacher. Then the phrase "unsurpassed way" from the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter becomes something inseparable from daily life. President Ikeda explains:

Nichiren Daishonin says, “The ‘unsurpassed way’ is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Now Nichiren and his followers are even more anxious with regard to Nam-myoho-renge-kyo than they are with their own lives” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 749). The ultimate meaning of faith is to treasure Nam-myoho-renge-kyo more highly than our own lives. It is to devote ourselves entirely to achieving the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law.

Concretely speaking, this means advancing together with the SGI, thoroughly protecting the SGI, and practicing together with the SGI in both times of hardship and joy. Apart from the SGI there is no *kosen-rufu* of the Mystic Law. This is the meaning of the statement by Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai President, “The Soka Gakkai organization is more precious than my life.” (*Living Buddhism*, August 1997, p. 42)

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN: PEACEFUL PRACTICES (DLS–22)

The “Peaceful Practices” chapter concludes the first half of the twenty-eight chapter Lotus Sutra known as the theoretical teaching. Regardless of the designation, the drama continues to highlight the essential need to practice and propagate this sutra with unflagging faith and concrete actions.

In discussions with Manjushri, the Buddha sets forth the demeanor and activities of those who will undertake the spreading of the Lotus Sutra. Shakyamuni’s encouragement is extensive and stresses the respect for the dignity of life, selfless action based upon compassion and wisdom.

The participants in the dialogue on the sutra discuss the concept of “peaceful practices” with the mindset of *shakubuku* — a direct form of propagation. They bring forth Nichiren Daishonin’s admonition that *shakubuku*, not *shoju*, is appropriate for a time when the

correct spirit of Buddhism has been distorted or lost. Nonetheless, President Ikeda affirms that even within the context of strongly refuting erroneous teachings, we need to employ the means that will be most effective in society:

From our standpoint, this means that even when we are spreading the Law “without concern for our own lives” we absolutely must not do anything that would reflect badly on the Law. Because we have the highest concern for the Law, we need to fully exercise our wisdom in propagating it. This is the heart of the “Peaceful Practices” chapter. It explains the spirit: “How can I help all people receive the benefit of the Mystic Law?” The “Peaceful Practices” chapter, therefore, finds full expression in our efforts to pray earnestly for the happiness of friends and to use our wisdom to tell others about Buddhism.

While teaching his followers the *shakubuku* spirit of not begrudging one’s life, Nichiren Daishonin also emphasized the importance of showing people genuine courtesy and respect, and of conducting oneself with wisdom. (*Living Buddhism*, September 1997, p. 34)

The chapter concludes with the “Parable of the Jewel in the Topknot.” It is the story of a great king that has been victorious over kings in other realms. To those who supported him in these battles he provides wonderful gifts. As do other great kings, he wears a precious jewel in the topknot upon his head as a sign of his royal status. To give it away would be seen as lowering his status. Finally, though, he removes his own jewel and bestows it upon those who have distinguished themselves. The Buddha explains to Manjushri that the Buddha saves his highest and most efficacious teaching, the Lotus Sutra, for bestowing on his disciples at the end, just like the king had saved the jewel in his topknot for the bravest warriors.

*(To be continued)*

1. “Three thousand realms in a single moment of life” is a philosophical system set forth by T’ien-t’ai of China based on the Lotus Sutra. The expression “three thousand” is an integration of the Ten Worlds, their mutual possession, the ten factors and the three realms of existence. These component principles may be thought of as the three thousand conditions that life may manifest in any single moment.
2. *Arhat*: A “worthy,” one who has attained the highest stage of Hinayana enlightenment. The Lotus Sutra urges one to reject the goal of *arhat* and instead strive for the highest level of enlightenment, that of Buddhahood.