

**THE LOTUS  
OF THE WONDERFUL  
LAW**

**OR  
THE LOTUS GOSPEL**

**SADDHARMA PUNDARIKA SUTRA  
MIAO-FA LIEN HUA CHING**

**W.E. SOOTHILL**

**Also available as a printed book  
see title verso for ISBN details**

THE LOTUS OF THE WONDERFUL  
LAW



THE LOTUS OF THE  
WONDERFUL LAW OR THE  
LOTUS GOSPEL

SADDHARMA PUNDARĪKA SŪTRA MIAO-FA LIEN HUA CHING

BY

*W.E. SOOTHILL*



CURZON PRESS

THE LOTUS OF THE WONDERFUL LAW  
Paperback edition

First published 1987 in the United Kingdom by Curzon Press Ltd. St John's Studios, Church Road, Richmond Surrey TW9 2QA

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.

“To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge's collection of thousands of eBooks please go to <http://www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk/>.”

ISBN 0-203-98608-3 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0 7007 0198 2 (Print Edition)

In association with the Clarendon Press at the University of Oxford

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

## PREFACE

THE Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful, or Mystic, Law is the most important religious book of the Far East. It has been described as "The Gospel of Half Asia". Dr. Timothy Richard twenty years ago translated a brief summary of its teaching, as also the profounder Sastra which he termed "The Awakening of Faith". These he published under the title of *The New Testament of Higher Buddhism*. He says: "though Buddhism has twelve different sects, yet I found the Lotus Scripture on the lecterns of every Buddhist temple I visited. It is also the chief Scripture in the Tiendai School of Buddhism in China, and is therefore the chief source of consolation to the many millions of Buddhists in the Far East." Quite recently Dr. Kenneth J. Saunders in his *The Gospel for Asia* has expressed the opinion that the three most influential religious books in the world are The Gospel of St. John, The Bhagavadgita, and The Lotus Sutra, and that what the Gospel of St. John is to the Christian and the Bhagavadgita to the Hindu, such is The Lotus to the Buddhist in the Far East. He goes farther and sees closer resemblances between the three books than others may see, at least in their ideals. When Dr. Richard published his synopsis of the Sutra under the title given above, the late Hon. Mrs. E.A. Gordon annotated it throughout with references to our New Testament with varying degrees of approximation.

Whatever view may be held of the intrinsic value of the work by Western readers, there is no doubt of its appreciation in the Far East, and it is perfectly justifiable to consider it as one of the greatest and most formative books of the world. Its influence from Tibet to Japan, from Mongolia to Cochin China has been greater than that of any other single book. For the ordinary Western reader it is much too long, as all that is said in prose is repeated in verse. There is, in consequence, repetition wearisome to the reader of many books. Undoubtedly the method of the author and of his period was useful for driving home truth to the sluggish mind, or to the mind free from other attractive entanglements. It is a method beloved of the unlettered. In order, therefore, that the Western reader may not miss the essential meaning I have omitted the repetitions and much unnecessary detail, while making it my aim to portray the message of the book as nearly as possible in its own way.

As a living book it is no longer read in Sanskrit, but only in the languages of the Far East. It is therefore their tone that I have sought to express in this abbreviated version.

The advent of Christianity to **Japan** has had its usual influence in arousing a moribund religion from lethargy, a lethargy which is inherent in Buddhism. A somewhat similar revival with a similar cause is occurring in China. In consequence, a fresh interest has arisen in Buddhist literature and not least in The Lotus. For this reason in 1921 I wrote to China for a copy of the Chinese text. Though the pages are less peppered with Sanskrit transliterations and Buddhist terms than other Buddhist classics, the work still presents serious difficulty to the Chinese reader and not less so to the Western student. It was therefore my purpose to translate the text for the use of the Western student.

The books had scarcely arrived in Oxford when one of those curious coincidences occurred, which the devout ascribe to external intervention, be it by the Buddha, as my visitor thought, or by some other Spiritual Power. An unusual type of visitor called on me. His name was Bunno Kato. It transpired that he was a Japanese leader of the Nichiren School of Buddhism. Most modestly he preferred of me an earnest request, that I would help him in translating into English The Lotus scripture. It is the great text of his School as also of certain other Schools of Buddhism. He knew the lengthy text by heart, and was intimately acquainted with the voluminous commentaries written on the work. The Chinese text common to Japan and China is the Kumarajiva version made in A.D. 406. It was with pleasure that we began our work on it together. A more faithful, or intelligent devotee of the work could not have been found. After nearly four years of application the English translation was finished in 1925. My final revision was completed at Harbin in Manchuria, while waiting for the Trans-Siberian train to bring me home after a visit to China, where I had gone as a member of Lord Willingdon's Commission. I was anxious to send the final corrections to Mr.Kato via China, for any papers carried through Russia were suspect and liable to confiscation, as I proved on my way through.

The translation of the whole work is still in manuscript, along with Mr. Kato's extensive introduction. It will form too large a book to appeal to any but students of the subject. I am therefore taking this method of making the work better known to the general reader of the Western world.

Too long has this literary masterpiece been buried in translations, unavoidably cumbrous and inspirationally innocuous. Hence this endeavour to reveal the contour of the most powerful spiritual drama known in the Far East.

W.E.S.

# CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
THE LOTUS SUTRA	27
I. The Assembly and the Illumination	28
II. Tactful Revelation	32
III. Parable of the Burning House	45
IV. Faith-discernment, the Prodigal Son	61
V. Parable of the Rain	72
VI. Prediction of the Four Disciples	78
VII. Parable of the Magic City	79
VIII. Prediction of Five Hundred Disciples	87
IX. Prediction of Ananda, Rahula, and others	90
X. The Preacher	93
XI. The Precious Shrine	97
XII. Devadatta. The Dragon-King's Daughter	106
XIII. Steadfastness. Prediction of Women and others	111
XIV. The Serene Life. The Four Spheres	115
XV. Hosts of Disciples issue from the Earth	123
XVI. Eternity of The Buddha. The Physician	130
XVII. The Merit and Reward of Faith	136
XVIII. The Merit and Reward of Accordance	141
XIX. The Merit and Reward of the Preacher	144
XX. The Bodhisattva "Never Despise"	149
XXI. Divine Power of a Buddha's Tongue	152

XXII. The Final Commission	156
XXIII. The King of Healing. Bodhisattva Beautiful	157
XXIV. Wonder-sound	160
XXV. Kuan-yin, Regarder of the Cries of the World	163
XXVI. Spells	168
XXVII. King Resplendent and Buddha Thunder-Voice	171
XXVIII. Universal Virtue	174
GLOSSARY	177
INDEX	180

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1.	Part of a scroll of the Sutra	5
2.	Modern Buddhist Monks	7
3.	Conception of the Buddha	27
4.	Buddha and the child's offering	41
5.	Buddha dividing the waters	73
6.	Buddha telling of a former Buddha	83
7.	The Precious Shrine	98
8.	The Dragon King	108
9.	Kuan-yin saving sailors	127
10.	The laying of the purchase money in bricks of gold	142
11.	Holding back the sun	153
12.	Kuan-yin breaking the Sword	164
13.	Spell-making	169

Acknowledgement for permission to use the above illustrations is gratefully made to the British Museum and Dr. Lionel Giles for Nos. 1, 9, and 12; to Lady Hosie for No. 2, and to the Bodleian Library for the other illustrations, which are taken from the eighteenth-century woodcuts of the **釋迦如來應化事蹟**, *Shih-chia Ju-lai Ying-hua Shih-chi*, or *Scenes from the Life of the Buddha*.

In this new impression the Frontispiece and illustration number 2 have been omitted for technical reasons.



# INTRODUCTION

## *Historical*

BY whom was this classic given? Devout Buddhists in the Far East say it contains the very words of Śakyamuni, the Buddha, his final teaching spoken towards the end of his days on the Vulture Peak in Nepal. Equally devout Buddhists in Ceylon, Burma, and Siam declare that it was entirely unknown in the ancient Canon, that it contradicts the essential teaching of the Buddha, and that it is the invention of a much later age. Thus we see Buddhism separated into its two great divisions, and it is over the works, of which The Lotus is the most representative type, that the division of Hinayana and Mahayana arises. These two terms were invented by the Mahayanists, who form the “Northern” School of Buddhism, that is the Far Eastern School now found in China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Tibet. The Hinayanists are the “Southern”, or Orthodox, School of Ceylon, Burma, Siam. Hinayana means Small wain, or vehicle; Mahayana, Large wain, or vehicle. By the Northern Buddhist, Hinayana is charged with conveying only the few to Nirvana, that is, those seeking salvation by the arduous way of works. Mahayana, on the other hand, professes to open the way for the many, indeed finally for all. Consequently Mahayanism is another term for Universalism, or Catholicism.

In Mahayana, salvation is attained not by laborious effort, but simply by faith in the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The great Bodhisattvas in particular are objects of faith and invocation. They are not historical beings but idealizations. Accredited with a vow not to enter into the final bliss of Buddhahood until all creatures are saved, they instantly respond to all who call upon them. Their salvation is not to a Nirvana of individual extinction or annihilation, but to heavens of joy and blessedness. Such happiness is infinite, to which all will finally attain. Those who claim it now by faith and invocation will escape the perils and pains of reincarnation. Those who delay their belief will continue to suffer until they cry for salvation, as they ultimately will cry.

Here lies the contrast, the difference, between the one School and the other—a difference at least as fundamental as between Roman and Reformed Christianity. But Roman and Reformed virtually make appeal to the same Book, or collection of books, the Bible. Not so is it with Hinayana and Mahayana, for they appeal to two differing sets of textual authorities. Hinayanists claim, with a measure of justice, that their texts are the only ancient and valid canons, and that these alone contain the real teaching of their Founder. Mahayanists, it is true, claim all those texts equally with their rivals, but declare that they were only the Buddha’s preparatory teaching, suited to the immature degree of his disciples’ immediate development. They insist that their Mahayana texts were his developed doctrine, given towards the end of his ministry, when his disciples were mature enough to understand his spiritual interpretation of the universe and of universal truth. They say that his attitude, during the period of Hinayana texts, was similar to the attitude of the schoolmaster, who leads on his pupils according to their ability through the preparatory stages, but when they are sufficiently grounded reveals to them the higher

learning. Consequently they claim that the Buddha only in the later stages of his life and before his departure, made the full revelation. This perfect revelation, they assert, is only to be found in the Mahayana texts; it is a revelation of the "All-Truth" which his disciples had been trained by easy stages finally to apprehend in its fullness.

The detached mind will not easily be beguiled into acceptance of the Mahayanist's special pleading. Mahayanists have not a shred of real evidence to show that the Buddha ever delivered any of the addresses attributed by them to him. All the weight of evidence is indeed against them. Whatever evidence there is rather supports the Hinayanists' claim to Apostolic Succession. Though these may not possess documentary evidence of the Buddha's actual sermons, at least the Sutras of Southern Buddhism may be considered as in the direct line of his teaching. As to the Mahayana Sutras, the unprejudiced cannot doubt that they are the invention of a later period, and that Mahayanism is a shoot grafted on to the original stock of the Buddhist Bodhi-tree. Whence, where and when this scion was grafted is still unknown. There are able scholars who assert that there is no need to look abroad for Mahayana ideas, because their embryo can be discovered in the orthodox scriptures. But there seems more justification for supposing the new scion to be of external origin, grafted on to Buddhism, perhaps in Northern India, perhaps still farther north in Central Asia. Whatever its origin this scion, grafted into the old tree, produced fruit of a different quality, more attractive to the eye and the taste; it was this off-shoot that struck in the north and east of Asia. The original stock grew older, died in its native soil, and was only saved by a branch which had been transplanted away from its native hills with their wintry snows to the southern sun, where it survives.

We may say, then, that The Lotus never had any direct connexion with Śakyamuni. It was the brilliant concept of a later age. The author, whose name and place of origin are unknown, was one of the world's greatest Apocalyptists. He was gifted with a rare imagination, and with remarkable dramatic powers which appeal to an imaginative and florid race. He was endowed with talents of detail and repetition that, while tedious and often puerile to our sated taste, were of prime value' in capturing the attention of his readers and in impressing his story on a leisurely people. His brilliant drama of spiritual things has outshone his name, while unconsciously he has been one of the chief instruments in dividing Buddhism. The inspiration that was to weld a fracture already yawning split it permanently in two. The two segments remain apart. The Southern Buddhists of Burma, Ceylon, Siam guard the treasure of the earthly Buddha's law, as they now guard the coffin supposed to contain his earthly remains so recently recovered. The Northern or Far Eastern Buddhists guard the treasure of an Eternal Buddha, of whom the earthly Buddha was but a temporal manifestation. Thus does Mahayana, or the universal chariot of salvation, compare itself with the Southern Hinayana, or the small chariot of laborious "works", which saves the few. In reality Mahayanism is, as the Southern Buddhists believe, a betrayal of Śakyamuni Buddha, in the interests of doctrines he never taught and which are a reversal of his principles, as recorded by his disciples.

As to the author, not only is his name unknown, but even the region of his origin is equally obscure. Presumably the writer composed the work in Sanskrit and in Northern India; it may, however, have been composed farther north in Central Asia. Though its date or period is not discovered, it seems to have been both a product, and perhaps a producer, of the reaction against the formalism which had fallen upon ascetic Buddhism.

Was it the offspring of ideas which had already hailed the dawn of spiritual liberation across Western Asia ? That is a question to which as yet there is no sufficient answer. Whatever the answer may be we now know that Buddhism, at the beginning of the Christian era, was a potent religious force across Central Asia, that its missionaries had already reached Western China and that, during the first century of our era, the religion, in a form clearly not of the Mahayana order, was welcomed at the Imperial Chinese Court. The Scythian ruler of Northern India, Kanishka, gave it his ardent support during that century, as the ruler Aśoka had done centuries earlier. That the Buddhism of Kanishka's period differed from the original cult is probable, but we do not yet know in what respect.

It must not be assumed that the new doctrines of salvation, which found their expression in the tractate "The Uprising (Awakening) of Faith" and in "The Lotus Sutra", were necessarily created by these works. It is more likely that those doctrines only found their ultimate expression in these works. Nor can we assume that they were known before Christian influence was felt in the lands of the new Buddhism. Though by no means convinced, or concerned, that Christian influence had anything to do with the creation of the new cult, yet I cannot ignore the fact that the first assured appearance in China of The Lotus was towards the end of the third century A.D. The Christian Church in India, whose foundation is attributed to the Apostle Thomas, may or may not have existed. That is perhaps a matter of minor importance to our subject in comparison with an influence of recognized potency, namely, the interchange of ideas which spread east and west along the remarkable trading corridor that stretched from Northern China to the Mediterranean. Graeco-Bactrian art is an instance of such propagation. Whether this uprising of the human spirit was a natural protest against priestcraft and ritual, is a question more easily put than answered. Here I can only call attention to the undoubted interchange of such ideas as existing before and after the Christian era.

We are on surer ground when we seek to trace the story of the translation of The Lotus into Chinese. The first partial version, of which no copy exists, was made by an unknown author in or about A.D. 255-6. Another lost version in twenty-eight chapters was made in A.D. 265, by the monk Dharmaraksha. He, or another of the same name, apparently made another version in A.D. 286 which still exists. A fourth version, now lost, was made by a translator of unknown origin in A.D. 335. The fifth version, which holds the field, is that from which the present excerpts are made. Its literary quality shows that it could only have been composed by very scholarly Chinese. But the actual translator to the Chinese pundits was Kumarajiva and he completed the work in A.D. 406. Kumarajiva is said to have come to China, or as some say was captured and brought there, from Kharashar in Turkestan. Others describe him as of "Takchas'ila" (Taxila) in the neighbourhood of Chitral. From A.D. 397 to 415 he lived in the Ch'in capital of Ch'ang-an in modern Shensi. At that time China was in a state of partition. Yao Hsing, the Ch'in ruler, supported and encouraged Kumarajiva, providing him with a large staff of Chinese writers for his very numerous translations and works.

A sixth version, still existing, was made in A.D. 601 by Jñanagupta and Dharmagupta, two monks reputed to be of Indian origin, and it agrees with the Sanskrit version in having twenty-seven chapters. The verses in Chapter XXV of Kumarajiva's version were not made by him but by a Jñanagupta of the Northern Chou dynasty A.D. 557-89; whether it was the same monk is not clear.

The three existing versions then are the Dharmaraksha version of A.D. 286, that of Kumarajiva which agrees with the Tibetan version, and that of Jñānagupta. Little is known of the sources whence these versions were made. Jñānagupta says that he has seen two originals, one on palm-leaves, the other on a silk-like fabric, which differed considerably from each other. Dharmaraksha's version he says was from that on palm-leaves, Kumarajiva's from the fabric. The palm-leaf version seems to have been in Sanskrit; the fabric version was in Kharashar characters, the writing used in Kuche (Kwei-tz), the supposed native place of Kumarajiva. The Kharashar text used by him is said to have been older than that on the palm-leaves.

We possess, then, a version by Kumarajiva which is accepted in the Far East. The Chinese date for its translation, A.D. 406, may be accepted, for its extraordinary popularity over a thousand years ago is attested by the large number of portions brought from the Tun Huang monastery by Sir Aurel Stein and now in the British Museum. These copies, made between A.D. 533 and 972, as also an earlier commentary of A.D. 508, lay hidden in a walled-up chamber probably from the eleventh century until the present century. The discovery and the bringing

教品時恒河沙等无量无边  
 菩薩得百千億  
 提陀羅及三千大千世界  
 微塵等諸菩薩得  
 具普賢道佛說是經時  
 普賢等諸菩薩舍利  
 弗等諸聲聞及諸天龍人  
 非人等一切大會  
 皆大歡喜受持佛語作禮而去

妙法蓮華經卷第十

大正三年歲次癸酉三月庚戌朔廿五日午刻開筆于陳吳堆南光初三世常  
 住三寶弟子自唯南行不絕等類有識無識受風末塵攝之形重昏

1. End of a roll of Chapter X of the Lotus Sutra in the Stein Collection at the British Museum

It was written on paper on May 4th, A.D. 533, six centuries before paper was made in Europe. The roll was found, with many others, by Sir Aurel M. Stein, in the Cave of the Thousand

Buddhas at Tun-huang. The photograph shows the last five lines of the text, the name of the Sutra, chapter, date, and name and description of the writer

of these copies to the light of the world is one of the romances of our generation. Sir Aurel, on his second intrepid journey of discovery from Kashmir to Kansu, followed the route taken by the famous Chinese monk Hsüan (or Yüan) Tsang, who in the seventh century made a pilgrimage from China to India. After crossing the dread Taklamakan desert, he reached Tun Huang in Kansu. In the cavetemple of The Thousand Buddhas the abbot in charge, while making repairs, had broken into a closed-up room, whose existence was till then unknown, where he found hidden a great collection of written scrolls. Sir Aurel, after much difficulty, secured a selection of the scrolls, and amongst them were the numerous portions of The Lotus Sutra already mentioned.

From the Sanskrit versions previously brought to the west during the nineteenth century two translations were made, one into French, the other into English. The French version, made from a manuscript provided by Mr. Brian Hodgson, was completed by Eugène Burnouf in 1852 under the title *Le Lotus de la bonne loi*. The English version was made by H.Kern of Leiden in 1909; it was published, under the title *Saddharma Pundarika*, as vol. xxi of the Sacred Books of the East. Both these translations were made for scholars.

As yet no translation of the Chinese version has been published, yet it is the Chinese version which is most in use in the Far East. There indeed The Lotus Sutra has its home; to many of the sects of "Northern Buddhism" it is a fundamental work, and by all it is highly valued. To "Southern Buddhists" it is, as already stated, heterodox and contrary to the teaching of their founder Śakyamuni. The complete text has now been translated into English by Mr. Kato and myself and it is hoped will yet be available to the Western student of Buddhism. It will be of value to those who wish to read in its entirety one of the oldest and most popular works giving the fully developed Mahayana doctrine. Nor will it be less useful to many who desire a work replete with Buddhist terminology which, translated phrase by phrase, can easily be compared with the Chinese text.

The Kumarajiva version, on which the present synopsis is based, is especially remarkable for the skill shown by the Chinese scholars in rendering his oral translations into their own written language. His version is probably more a paraphrase than a literal translation, but in the absence of the original text it is difficult to speak with assurance. However that may be, the Chinese scholars produced under him a work of great literary merit. The form of construction is strict and difficult, and the skill shown in the prose is as great as in the poetic part. A more gifted pen may yet reproduce the measure in English where my efforts have failed. Such failure has at least emphasized my opinion that Kumarajiva's Chinese version is one of the world's literary masterpieces.

*Form and Content*

In Kumarajiva's version, as in Dharmaraksha's previous translation, there are twenty-eight chapters. In the Sanskrit version and in Jñānagupta's Chinese translation there are twenty-seven. The difference is brought about in Chapter XI of the Sanskrit, which is given in two parts by the two first-named translators, making Chapters XI and XII.

From the first to the twenty-first chapters of Kumarajiva's version almost everything is said first in prose then in verse. The same remark applies to the corresponding chapters in the Sanskrit. The remaining chapters in both are without the verse repetition, with the noticeable exception of the twenty-fifth chapter on Avalokitesvara, i.e. Kwan-yin or Kwannon which, both in the Chinese and the Sanskrit versions, has prose and verse.

Each section, prose and verse, would, if separated, make a fairly complete whole. Whether the verse section, the gathas, preceded the prose is a question that Sanskrit scholars have not yet decided. Linguistic differences suggest that the drama was first composed in verse, and that the prose section was introduced later. The question can only be decided by those competent to judge. At present we must accept the version as it stands. The verse part in general follows the tenor of the prose discourse, but the differences are many. All the prose sections in Chinese are done into short sentences of similar length, which can be read rhythmically. All the verse parts differ in form from the Sanskrit, being in lines of sometimes four, sometimes five monosyllabic words to the line. In the translation here offered no attempt has been made to recast the order of the prose sentences or the verse lines; for with rare exceptions it has proved possible to translate them phrase by phrase, or line by line, thus providing the reader with a translation conveying the structure of the original in its presentation of ideas. No language not monosyllabic could possibly portray the form.

The following quotation from Chapter II may be taken as an example of the verse rhythm, if read as a four-beat measure:

“List well to the Law  
 Obtained by the Buddhas,  
 Which by infinite tact  
 They expound to the living,  
 Whose inmost thoughts,  
 The ways they tread,  
 Their desires diverse,  
 Their former karmas,  
 The Buddha knows well.  
 Hence with reason and parable,  
 Terms and expedients,  
 He leads all to rejoice,  
 Telling them sutras.

Or poems, or stories,  
Or marvels, or reasonings.

To some I preach Nirvana,  
An expedient to lead them  
To enter Buddha-wisdom,  
But to these I'd not yet said  
'You all shall become buddhas',  
For the time had not arrived."

From the first chapter we find The Lotus Sutra to be unique in the world of religious literature. A magnificent apocalyptic, it presents a spiritual drama of the highest order, with the universe as its stage, eternity as its period, and Buddhas, gods, men, devils, as the dramatis personae. From the most distant worlds and from past aeons, the eternal Buddhas throng the stage to hear the mighty Buddha proclaim his ancient and eternal Truth. Bodhisattvas flock to his feet; gods from the heavens, men from all quarters of the earth, the tortured from the deepest hells, the demons themselves crowd to hear the tones of the Glorious One.

Though the divine Speaker is the Buddha, even the earthly Śākyamuni Buddha, no longer is he the human Buddha, but the Eternal One. On earth he had assumed the human form with all its limitations. Now he reveals himself, *sub specie aeternitatis*, as the Eternal, Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent Buddha, creator-destroyer, recreator of all worlds, every world a Lotus rising from the waters to flower, shed its fragrance and die, only that fresh flowers may eternally spring.

The scene opens with the Buddha seated on Mount Gridhrakuta, or the Vulture Peak, in Nepal. Here the mount on which he had taught is spiritualized. Around him are gathered his 12,000 purified disciples, thousands more who had not yet completed their course, 80,000 bodhisattvas, 60,000 devas or gods, Brahma and his following of 12,000, dragon-kings with their hundreds of thousands, and demon kings with hundreds of thousands of followers. There, to all these orders of living beings, the Buddha displays the meaning of the Infinite, while from heaven there rain down countless showers of superb flowers filling the air with their fragrance, and all the universe is shaken.

From the centre of his forehead the Buddha sends forth a ray of light which lights up 18,000 worlds to the east, upwards to their highest heavens, downwards to their lowest hells. In like manner he shines upon and reveals the worlds in the other quarters, with all their living beings. In every world is revealed a Buddha teaching vast congregations of disciples.

Thus does the Buddha reveal his infinite worlds in infinite time. It is a colossal conception, expressed with an art that appeals to all who can enter into the spirit of the drama and allow the mind to imagine so tremendous a scene.

In the second act, Chapter II, the Buddha is presented coming forth from a trance-like meditation to explain why he had heretofore confined his teaching to the narrower way of works, while now he makes the greater revelation of faith. As a wise master he had been compelled to follow the tactical method of expediency, because his disciples could not

receive the higher wisdom, the more brilliant light, except by previous preparation. Only a Buddha, an Enlightened One, can fathom the meaning of All Existence, and his disciples, in their lower stage of wisdom, would never have been able to believe it possible that they also were called to Buddhahood, to the fullest enlightenment of the Buddha himself. Hence he had to lead them on by measured steps. Even now his All-truth is so vast that he fears to express it lest “all the worlds of gods, men, and demons be startled and perplexed and the doubting amongst his disciples fall into the great pit”. So portentous is the air, and so filled with doubt and foreboding are the hearts of his hearers, that multitudes withdraw, unable to bear the announcement which is to shatter all their past hardly-acquired merits. Here we trace an indication of the breach between the Hinayanists who withdraw and the Mahayanists who remain. At last only the host of faithful bodhisattvas remain, and to them he declares that none but they have power to apprehend his mystery. He proceeds to tell them that though he has seemed to preach other vehicles or modes of salvation, essentially there is but One Vehicle. The other yana have been but temporary expedients. There is but the One Vehicle, that in which the Buddha himself abides, and with which he will save all creatures, bringing them to the true Nirvana, which is not extinction of existence but extinction of all ills and all ignorance. All who pay homage to the Buddha, if with but a simple flower, are thereby admitted to the fellowship of countless Buddhas. Not one will fail to become Buddha, for all Buddhas have vowed to save all beings to perfect enlightenment, that is to perfect Buddhahood.

In the third chapter comes the joyous response of Śāriputra, full of ecstasy at the assurance that he is now “really a son of Buddha, born from the mouth of Buddha”, freed from all his errors and doubts and already possessed of the real Nirvana, the extinction of all ills, filled with a sublime peace. The Buddha responds telling him that in his later development he will be called Flower-Light Buddha, that he will reign over a world called Undeified, and that wherever the feet of his disciples tread jewel-flowers will spring. Soon follows the Parable of the Burning House which is given in this volume. Śāriputra, wishing to share his joy with his 1,200 brethren, asks what is to be their lot.

The answer is withheld for a time, or perhaps expressed in the form of parables; for instance, in Chapter IV occurs the Parable of the Prodigal Son, or the Seeking Father, the Buddha being the Father who seeks his wandering son and at last finds him and endows him with all his wealth. Again, in Chapter V, is the Parable of the Trees and Herbs, on which the Buddha, like a great cloud, pours his rain without discrimination or stint; fertilizing each according to its need and receptivity. After this interlude he proceeds to predict in Chapter VI the future of his disciples; for instance, he foretells that Maha-Kāśyapa will be the Buddha Radiance, his Buddha-world being known as Radiant Virtue and his Buddha-period named Great Magnificence; that Subhuti will be the Buddha Name-Form in a Realm of Jewels, in a Buddha-period Jewel-kalpa; another’s Buddha-name will be Golden-Light, and another’s Fragrance of Sandalwood. Then comes a further artistic interlude in the Parable of the Magic City on the weary way to the Land of Jewels, which forms the title and one of the subjects of Chapter VII. This parable follows on the marvellous story of a Buddha who, in his human existence, had sixteen sons, all of whom became Buddhas and preached in their generation the wonderful Lotus doctrine. In Chapter VIII the Buddha returns to the prediction of the future of his disciples, when five hundred of them learn their fate, as do others. The prediction is continued in Chapter IX