

Examining The Lotus Sutra's Idealism*

Tsugunari Kubo

1-0 The Lotus Sutra's premise that all human beings possess the buddha-nature and are capable of attaining enlightenment is accepted everywhere by followers of the Mahayana tradition.

1-1 An all-inclusive prediction is given to *ye 'pi ke-cid...tān...kula-putrān vā kula-duhitṛ vā...*(men or women of good intent) that they will attain *anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi*, i.e, the highest complete enlightenment, in chapter ten, “*Dharma-bhāṇakā*”:

ye 'pi ke-cid Bhaiṣajyarāja tathāgatasya parinirvṛtasyēmaṃ dharma-paryāyaṃ śroṣyanti antaśa eka-gāthām api śrutvā 'ntaśa ekenāpi cittōtpādenābhyanumoda=yiṣyanti tān apy ahaṃ Bhaiṣajyarāja kula-putrān vā kula-duhitṛ vā vyākaromy anuttarāyāṃ samyak-saṃbodhau /

{Chap. X; KN224.8; WT196.11}

Oh, Bhaiṣajyarāja, in the time after the Buddha's passing, those who will hear of this Dharma-way (*dharma-paryāya*), even by a single verse, and who, even with part of their mind, will willingly accept it, I predict to those men or women of good intent, oh *Bhaiṣajyarāja*, that they will be in [the realm of] *anuttarā samyak-saṃbodhi*.

<又如来滅度之後、若有人聞妙法華經乃至一偈一句、一念隨喜者、我亦與授阿耨多羅三藐三菩提記。Taisho 9.30c>

The use of *kula-putra* and *kula-duhitṛ* indicates people in general; the use of these terms shows the sutra's intent to convey that all people—without discrimination as to gender, age, etc.—are to be the beneficiaries of the prediction.

Successively, the quoted reference poses the question, “what kinds of beings will become Buddha?” The answer clearly indicates the *kula-putras* or *kula-duhitṛs* who are mentioned in the reference above. This construction can be acknowledged as a confirmation of the sutra's attitude of non-discrimination.

tatra Bhaiṣajyarāja yaḥ kaś-cid anyataraḥ puruṣo vā strī vāivam vadet / kīḍṣāḥ khalv api te sattvā bhaviṣyanti anāgate 'dhvani tathāgatā arhantaḥ samyak-

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saṃbuddhā iti / tasya Bhaiṣajyarāja puruṣasya vā striyā vā sa kula-putro vā kula-duhitā vā darśayitavyaḥ

{Chap. X; WT197.6;KN225.11,*anyatarah vā puruṣo stri*, misread in WT197 note1}

Then, Bhaiṣajyarāja, if any other man or woman would ask you what sorts of beings will indeed become *tathāgatās arhats samyak-saṃbuddhas* in the future, you should show such a man or woman of good intent to that man or woman.

<藥王、若有人問何等衆生於未來世當作佛、應示是諸人等於未來世必得作佛 Taisho 9.30下>

1-2 At the end of the sutra’s main section (by Kumārajīva’s version, thought to have the original construction regarding the order of the chapters), there is the story, in chapter nineteen, “*Sadāparibhūta*,” of a bodhisattva who was Śākyamuni in a previous life. The only practice this bodhisattva does is to say to anyone he meets, regardless of that person’s reaction, “Live as a bodhisattva, and you will become a Buddha”:

nāham āyuṣmanto yuṣmākaṃ paribhavāmi | aparibhūtā yūyam | tat kasya hetoḥ | sarve hi bhavanto bodhisattva-caryāṃ carantu | bhaviṣyatha yūyaṃ tathāgatā arhantaḥ samyak-saṃbuddhā iti

{Chap. XIX; KN378.1; WT320.5}

Gentlemen! I do not belittle you; you are not those who are belittled. What is the reason for this? All of you honorable men must do bodhisattva practices.

You will become buddhas (*tathāgatā arhantaḥ samhak-saṃbuddhā*).

nāhaṃ bhagīnyo..... [almost identical content]

{Chap. XIX; KN378.6;WT320.12}

Ladies! I don’t.....

<(是比丘凡有所見若比丘比丘尼優婆塞優婆夷皆悉禮拜讚歎而作是言。) 我深敬汝等不敢輕慢。所以者何。汝等皆行菩薩道當得作佛。{*āyuṣmanto* (gentlemen), *bhagīnyo* (ladies) are not translated literally} Taisho 9.50下>

As the story unfolds, it depicts that *Sadāparibhūta*, following his efforts at that practice, had an opportunity to hear the teaching of the Lotus Sutra. The sutra shows in this way that the goal of encountering the sutra was not the motivation for his original efforts; rather, his practice was the manifestation of his own spirit. In this particular story the sutra is expressing its basic premise vis-à-vis the human spirit, i.e., it is expressing its indiscriminating confidence in the spirit of all human beings.

2-0 However, there are different, and even conflicting, interpretations with regard to the application of the sutra’s premise of non-discrimination. Even within a single organization of followers of the sutra, practitioners of its particular teaching may differ with each other in their individual approaches. Concerning the text of the sutra, when only selected portions are read or quoted without regard to the entire context, different

meanings can be attributed to what the sutra is saying.

2-1 In the case of chapter ten, “*Dharma-Bhānaka*,” even though the sutra has said that a potential *dharma-bhānaka* is a *kula-putra* or *kula-duhitā*, i.e., an ordinary person who hears the sutra’s teaching, when the sutra gives descriptions of individual *dharma-bhānakas*, it seems to indicate that such individuals are special ones:

*sa hi Bhaiṣajyarāja kula-putro vā kula-duhitā vā tathāgato veditavyaḥ
sadevakena lokena tasya ca tathāgatasyaivaṃ sat-kāraḥ kartavyo*
{Chap. X; KN226.1; WT197.14}

Indeed, Bhaiṣajyarāja, that man or woman of good intent should be discerned as a tathāgata and should be revered in the same manner as a tathāgata by the beings, as well as by the residents of the heavens, in this world.

<若善男子善女人・・是人一切世間所應瞻奉、應以如來供養而供養之。Taisho9.30.c>

The sutra goes on to specially emphasize the position of the *dharma-bhānaka*:

*pariṇiṣpannaḥ sa Bhaiṣajyarāja kula-putro vā kula duhitā va□’ nuttarāyāṃ
samyak-saṃbodhau veditavyas tathāgata-darsī ca□ veditavyo lokasya
hitānukampakaḥ praṇidhāna-vaśenōpapanno ’smiñ Jambudvīpe manuṣyeṣv asya
dharma-paryāyasya saṃprakāśanatāyai /*
{Chap. X; KN226.6; WT197.22}

Such a man or woman of good intent should be, Bhaiṣajyarāja, discerned as being established in *anuttarā samyak-saṃbodhi*. That person should also be discerned as being like a tathāgata (*tathāgata-darsin*) who, with a desire for the happiness of the world, wishes to appear among the people of this Jambudvīpa to expound this Dharma-way (*dharma-paryāya*).

<當知此人是 大菩薩、成就阿耨多羅三藐三菩提、哀愍衆生願生此間。

廣演分別妙法華經。Taisho 9.30.c>

It is a delicate problem to grasp the meaning of *tathāgata-darsin* in the foregoing citation (Kumārajīva, in his reading, translated the compound as “great bodhisattva”). However, the sutra’s intent can be understood through its ensuing expression:

tathāgata-dūtaḥ sa Bhaiṣajyarāja kula-putro vā kula-duhitā vā veditavyaḥ
{Chap. X; KN226.11; WT198.2}

the man or woman of good intent should be acknowledged as an envoy of the tathāgata.

<當知是人則如來使 Taisho 9.30.c>

The concept of *anuttarā samyak-saṃbodhi* in the sutra is that of a realm in which there are not only buddhas, but which bodhisattvas can also experience as a result of their desire and efforts (I examined and reported on this at the 10th IABS conference, which is published in Indian Journal of Buddhist Studies Vol. IV, No.1 1992, of BJK Institute of Buddhist and Asian Studies, Varanasi). Based only on the above selections, a reader may

misconceive a *dharmabhāṇaka* as being a buddha, a person equivalent to a buddha, or at least as a buddha's "special deputy." Reading the entire chapter, however, one will encounter the following at its conclusion:

ye cāpi tasy' āśrita bhonti sattvās
te bodhisattvā laghu bhonti sarve /
 {Chap. Xvs35; KN238.3; WT205.19}
 and so, those beings who rely on them
 will all easily become bodhisattvas
 <若親近法師 速得菩薩道 Taisho 9.32.b>

We can find here the sutra's intent to open the Way to all beings. It shows the sutra's concept to value the positive attitude of being its ambassador, i.e., to value those who act as *dharmabhāṇaka* through their efforts to communicate with others about the sutra.

3-0 The charm and power of the Lotus Sutra is found in the fact that it entrusts the task of personal and societal benefit to human beings themselves. Yet, why would the Sutra propose to do this if these same human beings are people who are not buddhas, who are not even bodhisattvas who have reached the stage of non-regression, and who are constantly misled by their own intentions and desires?

3-1 The sutra is realistic in its assessment of the condition of human beings. The verse portion of chapter two, "*Upāya-kausalya*," describes a condition of beings in relation to a lack of fortune based upon wisdom (*prajñā*). They become blinded (*andhī-kṛta*) by desire (*kāma*) and they don't seek the way that leads to the end of sufferings (*duḥkha: dukha*) in the six states of existence, which are a succession of sufferings:

ahaṃ pi paśyāmi daridra-sattvān
prajñāya puṇyehi ca viprahīṇān /
praskanna saṃsāri niruddha durge
magnāḥ punaḥ duḥkha-paramparāsu //
ṭṛṣṇā-vilagnās camarī ' va vāle
kāmair ihāndhī-kṛta sarva-kālam /
na buddham eṣanti mahā ' nubhāvaṃ
na dharmā mārganti dukhānta-gāminam //
gatīṣu ṣaṭṣū parigraddha-cittāḥ
kudṛṣṭi-drṣṭīṣu sthitā akampyāḥ /
duḥkhātu duḥkhaṃ prativedamānāḥ /
kāruṇya mahyaṃ balavan tu teṣu //
 {Chap. IIvv110-112; WT52.20 (KN54.7)}

I, indeed, look at the sentient beings in difficulties
 who are lacking the fortune based upon wisdom /

Being in the flow of worldly affairs, being confined to the worst life,
 Being drowned, furthermore, in a succession of sufferings //
 Being attached to thirsts like the tail is to the mountain cow
 They always become blinded by desire in this existence /
 They don' t seek for Buddha, who has great power,
 Or the teaching that leads to the end of suffering //
 In the six states of existence, their attached minds
 Do not move, standing on the thoughts of false views /
 Encountering suffering after suffering
 However, my compassion for them has the power //

< 舍利弗當知 我以佛眼觀 見六道衆生 貧窮無福慧 入生死嶮道 相續苦不斷
 深著於五欲 如犛牛愛尾 以貪愛自蔽 盲瞶無所見 不求大勢佛 及與斷苦法
 深入諸邪見 以苦欲捨苦 爲是衆生故 而起大悲心 Taisho 9.9.b >

3-2 The description from chapter two quoted above (3-1) can be seen as one that is a pre-description of the condition of the beings, including such dreadful ones as *yakṣas*, in the metaphor of the burning house in chapter three, “*Aupamyā*.” The metaphor says that there are five hundred beings in the burning house (*dvayor vā trayāṇāṃ vā caturṇāṃ vā pañcānāṃ vā prāṇi-śātānām*, KN72.4; WT69.18; 一百二百乃至五百人 Taisho 9.12.b; also in vs41, *śātāna pañcāna . . . prāṇinām*, KN83.3; WT77.6; 有五百人 Taisho 9.13.c) while the number of children who can escape from the burning house through the gate is only twenty (*pañca vā daśa vā viṃśatir vā*; KN72.8; WT69.24; 若十、二十、或至三十 Taisho 9.12.b; and in vs75, *viṃśa*, KN88.3; WT82.16; not translated, only 此諸子等 Taisho 9.14b).

3-3 The metaphor of the burning house in chapter three is given in both prose and verse. The verse section is particularly graphic in its description of the conditions inside the house. It could be said that the “law of the jungle” is in effect there, and the metaphor is suggesting that such is the reality of human society. Verse 49 of the narration says:

yadā ca te yakṣa bhavanti tṛptāḥ
para-sattva khādīva suraudra-cittāḥ /
para-sattva-māṃsaiḥ paritṛpta-gātrāḥ
kalahaṃ tadā tatra karonti tīvram //

(Chap. IIIvs49; KN84.5; WT78.14)

And when these yakṣas become satisfied,
 Having, with ferocious minds, eaten other beings /
 And filled their stomachs with the flesh of others' bodies,
 They then engage in keener competition //

< (夜叉競來 爭取食之) 食之既飽 惡心轉熾 鬪爭之聲 甚可怖畏 Taisho 9.14.a >

3-4 In the explanation of the metaphor, the children who are able to escape from the

house—those who can hear and accept the explanation and encouragement of their father, i.e., the Buddha—are described as the children of the Buddha (*buddha-putrā*, IIIvs93; KN91.2; WT85.21; (諸子 Taisho 9.15.a) who are encouraged to “ride” the Buddha’s vehicle (*bauddha yāna*, IIIvs98; KN91.12; WT86.14; 佛智慧Taisho 9.15.a). No explanation can be found regarding the fate of beings other than the children, but an explanation can be found of what happens (*vipāka*, IIIvv112;113; KN93.14, 94.2;WT88.24, 89.2; (則斷一切 世間佛種), 罪報Taisho 9.15.b) when the Buddha’s teachings are, by intent, not heard and acknowledged (Jkṣip, Chap. IIIvv.112,113; KN93.13,94.1; WT88.21,25; 毀謗, 擧蹙而懷疑惑 . . . 誹謗 Taisho 9.15.b).

3-5 Various living conditions resulting from the consequences of that are described, starting from the conditions of those born in hells, to those born as animals, to those born as human beings:

puruṣ’ ātmabhāvaṃ ca yadā labhante
te kuṇḍakā laṅgaka bhonti tatra /
kubjā ’tha kāṇā ca jaḍā jaghanyā
āsraddadhantā ima sūtra mahyam //
apratyanīyās ca bhavanti loke
pūṭi mukhā teṣa pravāti gandhaḥ /
yakṣa graho ukrami teṣa kāye
āsraddadhantān’ ima buddha-bodhim //

{Chap. IIIvv122, 123; WT90.12; (KN95.5)}

When born as human beings

Their limbs will not have good function /

They will have troubles of body and back, and have bad sight and sound,

Those who do not accept this sutra that I teach. //

They will also not be welcomed by society,

Their breath will always be foul /

The spirit of yakṣa will infuse them,

Those who do not believe in this buddha-awareness.

<若得爲人 諸根闇鈍 矬陋攣蹙 盲聾背僵 有所言說 人不信受。口氣常臭

鬼魅所著Taisho 9.15.c >

The description consists of thirteen verses, continuing to vs.134. Including the previous verses beginning at vs.112, these descriptions reveal what the sutra considers to be the essential condition of human life itself. The examples must reflect the typically real situation of human difficulties and the unwholesome conditions of the people during the time of the compilation of this sutra. Verse 131 says that “the grounds of their gardens” will become as hell for them, and the conditions of their homes are *apāya-bhumi*, unwholesome states of life (*udyāna-bhūmī narako ’sya bhoti niveśanaṃ tasya apāya-*

bhūmiḥ, KN96.11; WT91.26; 常處地獄 如遊園觀 在餘惡道 如己舍宅 Taisho 9.15c). And vs. 133 describes them having physical woes such as *vicarcikā*, *kaṇḍū*, which can be translated as tumors or rashes or, in another sense, psoriasis; and also *pāman*, *kuṣṭha*, *kilāsa*, which can be accepted as both the physical condition and the actual suffering of leprosy (KN96.16, WT92.6; 水腫乾瘡 疥癩癰疽 Taisho.9.16.a). The sutra's ideal concept, as seen in from the perspective of the Buddha, is that the whole human life situation, i.e., physical and social matters as well as spiritual ones, can be changed or improved through development of their own awareness and subsequent reformation of their spiritual condition. However, if one takes the compilers of the sutra to be the actual authors of the explanation, the contents of this part can be seen as an aggressive criticism of those who hold views opposing those of the followers of this sutra. The correct reading can be grasped through a comprehensive understanding of the entire text.

4-0 As for acknowledging the sutra's attitude toward people through the reading of the entire text, we must examine the instructions given to one who would be its evangelist.

4-1 At the beginning of the particular section of chapter three which was just examined, Sāriputra was ordered by the Buddha to not expound the teaching (*mā . . . tvaṃ . . . vadesi etat*, KN93.11; WT88.17) to people whose attitudes render them unable to value it properly.

In the middle of the sutra, however, after the discussion in chapter ten regarding who will be expounders of the sutra, in chapter thirteen a discussion regarding the attitudes of such evangelists appears:

punar aparaṃ Mañjuśrīr bodhisattvo mahāsattvas tathāgatasya parinirvṛtasya paścime kāle paścime samaye paścimāyāṃ pañcāśatyāṃ saddharma-vipralope vartamāna imaṃ dharma-paryāyaṃ saṃprakāśayitu-kāmaḥ sukha-sthito bhavati sa sukha-sthitaś ca dharmam bhāṣate kāya-gataṃ vā pustaka-gataṃ vā / pareṣāṃca deśayamāno nādhimātram upālabha-jātiyo bhavati na cānyān dharmabhāṣakān bhikṣūn parivadati na cāvarṇam bhāṣate na cāvarṇam niścārayati na cānyeṣāṃ śrāvaka-yānīyānāṃ bhikṣūṇāṃ nāma gṛhītvā 'varṇam bhāṣate na cāvarṇam cārayati na ca teṣāṃ antike pratyarthika-saṃjñī bhavati / tat kasya hetoḥ / yathā 'pīdaṃ sukha-sthāna-sthitatvāt / sa āgat' āgatānāṃ dhārmasrāvaṇikānāṃ anuparigrāhikayā anabhyasūyayā dharmam deśayati / avivadamāno na ca praśnaṃ pṛṣṭaḥ śrāvaka-yānena visarjayati / api tu khalu punas tathā visarjayati yathā buddha-jñānam abhisambudhyate //
{Chap XIII; WT241.7 (KN282.9.)}

Furthermore, oh Mañjuśrī, in the five hundred years following the Tathāgata's passing when acceptance of the saddharma is interrupted, the bodhisattva *mahāsattva* who wishes to expound this Dharma-way remains at tranquil

ease. He teaches the Dharma, remembered or recorded, in a peaceful state, and explains to others without losing his composure; neither critical of various dharma-expounding monks nor spreading rumors or speaking ill of them. He does not refer to the various monks of *śravaka-yānas* by name; neither does he spread rumors nor speak ill of them, or engage in hostile rivalry with them. What is the reason for this? Certainly it is that his condition is one of tranquil ease.

He teaches the Dharma to those who come, one-by-one, with compassion and with smiles. He does not reply to questions by argument or by way of the *śravaka*. Rather, he replies in ways to make inquirers become awakened to the Buddha's wisdom.

＜又文殊師利、如來滅後於末法中、欲說是經、應住安樂行。若口宣說若讀經時、不樂說人及經典過。亦不輕慢諸餘法師。不說他人好惡長短。於聲聞人亦不稱名說其過惡。亦不稱名讚歎其美。又亦不生怨嫌之心。善修如是安樂心故、諸有聽者不逆其意。

有所難問、不以小乘法答但以大乘而為解說、令得一切種智。Taisho 9.37c＞

4-2 At the beginning of chapter seventeen, the story shows a dramatic change regarding the attitude of followers who are evangelists. The description says that when anyone, even a child, hears something of extreme value, that person will share it with whomever he or she next encounters.

*yaḥ kaś-cid Ajita kula-putro vā kula-duhitā vā tathāgatasya parinirvṛtasyêmaṃ
dharma-paryāyaṃ deśyamānaṃ samprakāśyamānaṃ śṛṇuyād bhikṣur vā bhikṣuṇī
vôpāsako vôpāsikā vā vijña-puruṣo vā kumārako vā kumārikā vā śrutvā
cābhy anumodet / sacet tato dharma-śravaṇād utthāya prakrāmet sa ca vihāra-gatovā
gr̥ha-gato vā 'raṇya-gato vā vīthi-gato vā grāma-gato vā janapada-gato vā
tān hetūṃs tāni kāraṇāni taṃ dharmam yathā-śrutam yathôdgr̥hitam yathā-
balaṃ aparasya sattvasy' ācakṣīta...*

{Chap. XVII; KN345.7; WT292.10}

Suppose that a man or woman, oh Ajita, in the time following the Buddha's passing, whether a monk or a nun, a lay man or a lay woman, a person of discretion, or just a boy or a girl, hears this Dharma-way shown and explained, responds with joy, and then departs from the dharma assembly and goes, by happenstance, for instance, to a monastery, to his or her home, to the woods, to a town, to a village, or to a place crowded with people, and speaks of the Dharma that he or she has heard to other people according to their capacity to understand.

＜阿逸多。如來滅後。若比丘比丘尼優婆塞優婆夷及餘智者若長若幼。聞是經隨喜已。從法會出至於餘處。若在僧坊若空閑地若城邑巷陌聚落田里。如其所聞。（為父母宗親善友知識）隨力演說。Taisho 9.46B＞

This can be seen as indicating a level of willingness for human beings, and can be

seen as setting the stage for the story, in chapter nineteen, of *Sadāparibhūta*. While the story of *Sadāparibhūta* was previously referred to in (1-2), another aspect of it is treated here. *Sadāparibhūta*'s message to everyone was "I do not belittle you..." When hearers were not impressed with his message and were antagonistic to the point of hurling bricks or stakes at him, he merely moved out of range of thrown objects and repeated his message even louder (KN379.2; WT320.24). In showing that the bodhisattva did not abandon his effort of saying, "I do not belittle you..." to all people without exception, the narrative is suggesting to the followers the sutra's attitude toward perseverance.

5-0 In the construction of *Kumārajīva*'s version, the chapters that come as addenda can be said to maintain the attitudes shown in the sutra's main part.

5-1 The chapters on *Gadgadasvara* and *Avalokiteśvara* (Chapters XXIII and XXIV) have suggestions regarding people's role with the framework of communication that we have not seen previously in the sutra. In the *Gadgadasvara* chapter we find:

*bhagavān āha / eṣa khalu punaḥ Padmaśrīr Gadgadasvaro bodhisattvo
mahāsattvo bahubhī rūpair imaṃ Saddharmapuṇḍarīkaṃ dharma-paryāyaṃ
deśayati sma /*

{Chap. XXIII; KN432.10; WT358.13}

The Bhagavat said, "Indeed, Padmaśrī, this bodhisattva mahāsattva Gadgadasvara also showed this *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* Dharma-way by manifesting himself in many forms."

< 華德、汝但見妙音菩薩其身在此、而是菩薩現種種身、處處爲諸衆生、說是經典
Taisho.9.56.a >

Examples of the forms in which the bodhisattva appeared are then given, including: wealthy merchant (*śreṣṭhin*), householder (*gṛha-patī*), civic leader (*naigama*), their wives (*śreṣṭhi-bhāryā*, *gṛhapatī-bhāryā*, *naigama-bhāryā*), and also children (*dāraka*, *dārikā*), (KN433.6; WT358.22). As for the *Avalokiteśvara* chapter, the Chinese version has almost the same contents as the *Gadgadasvara* chapter, but all of the Sanskrit manuscripts that are available for examination do not have this part (KN445.6; WT365.28, if the part existed).

The part from *Kumārajīva*'s version reads:

< 應以長者身得度者、即現長者身而爲說法。 · ·居士身 · ·宰官身 · ·婆羅門身 · ·。
應以長者居士宰官婆羅門婦女身得度者、即現婦女身而爲說法。應以童男童女身得度
者、即現童男童女身而爲說法 Taisho 9.57b >

... and for one who needs to be rescued by the wealthy person, he expounds the dharma by appearing as them. ...or the house holder...or the civic leader...or the brahman... and for one who needs to be rescued by the wife of a wealthy person, or of a householder, or of a civic leader, or of a brahman, he expounds the dharma by appearing as those wives, and for one who needs to be rescued by a boy or a girl, he expounds the

dharmas by appearing as a boy or a girl.

The sutra describes how both bodhisattvas will appear in this world in many differing manifestations, like buddhas, boys or girls, people in all walks of life, and even as our spouses. Thus the sutra is indicating that human communication is a key for the betterment of its society.

5-2 The final chapter of the sutra might be considered as containing its admonition to humanity. This “*Samantabhadrôtsāhana*” chapter expresses how the evangelists of the sutra are watched over and protected, and contains almost the same description as the resulting conditions when the teachings are, by intent, not heard and acknowledged.

6-0 The final repetition of its admonition to humanity reflects the actual condition of human society during the time of the compilation of the text. The condition is all the same in our modern society. The value and importance of the sutra’s perspective is underlined through its premise that human beings possess a basic and essential nature of goodness, and that, through their own actions and attitudes, they can engineer the improvement of themselves and their society.