

Medicine Master Sutra

Sutra of the Merit and Virtue of the Past Vows of
Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata

Translated by the Buddhist Text Translation Society

Thus I have heard. At one time the Bhagavan was travelling through various lands to teach living beings. He arrived at Vaisali ["City of Extensive Adornments"] and stayed beneath a tree from which music resounded. With him were eight thousand great Bhikshus and thirty-six thousand Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas; also kings, ministers, Brahmans, lay disciples; gods, dragons, and the rest of the eightfold division; beings both human and non-human. The immeasurable great multitude respectfully surrounded him, and he spoke Dharma for them.

At that time, the Dharma Prince Manjushri, receiving the awesome inspiration of the Buddha, rose from his seat, bared one of his shoulders, knelt on his right knee, and, inclining his head and placing his palms together, said to the Bhagavan, "World Honored One! We wish you would speak about such Dharmas as the Buddhas' names, the great vows they made in the past, and their supreme merit and virtue, so that those who hear them will be rid of their karmic hindrances. This request is also for the sake of bringing benefit and joy to sentient beings in the Dharma-Image Age."

The Buddha then praised the Pure Youth Manjushri: "Good indeed! Good indeed, Manjushri. With great compassion you now request that I speak about the Buddhas' names and the merit and virtue of their past vows, for the sake of rescuing sentient beings who are bound up by karmic obstacles, and for the purpose of bringing benefit, peace, and joy to beings who live in the Dharma-Image Age. Listen attentively to my words and reflect on them extremely well, for I will now answer you."

Manjushri said, "Please do speak. We are glad to listen."

The Buddha told Manjushri, "Passing from here to the east, beyond Buddhalands

numerous as the sand grains in ten Ganges rivers, is a world called 'Pure Vaidurya.' The Buddha there is named Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, Of Proper and Equal Enlightenment, Perfect in Understanding and Practice, Well Gone One, One Who Understands the World, Supreme Lord, Regulating Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, Bhagavan. Manjushri, when that World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, was practicing the Bodhisattva path in the past, he made twelve great vows that enable all sentient beings to obtain what they seek."

"The first great vow: 'I vow that in a future life, when I attain anuttarasamyaksambodhi, my body will shine with dazzling light that will illumine measureless, countless, boundless worlds. My body will be adorned with the thirty-two heroic features and the eighty subsidiary characteristics, and I will enable all beings to become as I am.'"

"The second great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, my body will be as bright and clear as vaidurya, flawlessly pure, vastly radiant, majestic with merit and virtue, abiding at ease, adorned with blazing nets brighter than the sun and the moon. Beings dwelling in darkness will be illuminated and will succeed in all their endeavors.'"

"The third great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I will, by means of limitless, unbounded wisdom and skill-in-means, enable all sentient beings to obtain an inexhaustible supply of material necessities so they are without the slightest want.'"

"The fourth great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall lead those sentient beings who practice deviant paths to reside in the Way of Bodhi, and those who travel on the vehicles of the Hearer or Pratyekabuddha to abide in the Great Vehicle.'"

"The fifth great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall enable limitless and boundless numbers of sentient beings who cultivate Brahma conduct within my Dharma to perfectly uphold the three clusters of precepts without exception. Should there be any violation, upon hearing my name, they will regain their purity and not fall into the evil destinies.'"

"The sixth great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, if there are sentient beings whose bodies are inferior and whose faculties are imperfect, who

are ugly, dull, blind, deaf, mute, deformed, paralyzed, hunchbacked, or afflicted with skin disease, insanity, or various other sicknesses and sufferings, upon hearing my name they shall all become endowed with upright features, keen intelligence, and perfect faculties, and they shall be free of sickness and suffering."

"The seventh great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall cause sentient beings who are oppressed by many illnesses and who are without aid, without a place to turn, without a doctor, without medicine, without relatives, and without a family, who are poverty-stricken and filled with suffering to be cured of their sicknesses upon having my name pass by their ear, so they are peaceful and happy in body and mind. They will have a family and relatives, and acquire an abundance of property and wealth, and even realize unsurpassed Bodhi.'"

"The eighth great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, if there are women who give rise to a deep loathing for their female body and wish to renounce it because they are oppressed and disturbed by the myriad sufferings of being female, upon hearing my name, they will be able to turn from women into men who are replete with male features and ultimately realize unsurpassed Bodhi.'"

"The ninth great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall liberate sentient beings from the nets of demons and the bonds of external sects. If they have fallen into the dense forests of evil views, I shall lead them to have proper views and to gradually cultivate the practices of Bodhisattvas so they will quickly realize unsurpassed, proper and equal Bodhi.'"

"The tenth great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall cause sentient beings who fall into the hands of the law and are bound, interrogated, whipped, fettered, imprisoned, sentenced to execution, or subjected to endless disasters, hardships, abuse, and humiliation so that they are torn by grief and distress and suffering in body and mind, to obtain, upon hearing my name, liberation from all worry and suffering by means of my blessings, virtue, and awesome spiritual power.'"

"The eleventh great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall cause all sentient beings who are so plagued by hunger and thirst that they create all kinds of bad karma in their quest for food, upon hearing my name and single-

mindedly accepting and maintaining it, to be filled with delicious food and drink and afterward, by means of the flavor of Dharma, to settle in ultimate peace and happiness."

"The twelfth great vow: 'I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, if there are sentient beings who are poor and without clothes so that day and night they are troubled by mosquitoes and flies, and by cold and heat, upon hearing my name and single-mindedly accepting and maintaining it, they shall obtain all kinds of fine and wonderful garments that accord with their tastes, as well as a variety of precious adornments, flower garlands, fragrant balms, and the enjoyments of music and various kinds of talents, so that all their hearts' delights will be fulfilled.'"

"Manjushri, these are the twelve sublime and wonderful vows that the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, One of Proper and Equal Enlightenment, made while cultivating the Bodhisattva Way."

"Moreover, Manjushri, if I were to speak for a eon or more about the great vows made by the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, when he practiced the Bodhisattva Way and about the merit, virtue, and adornments of his Buddhaland, I could not finish."

"That Buddhaland has always been completely pure; there are no women, no evil destinies, and no sounds of suffering. The ground is made of vaidurya, with golden cords lining the roads. The city walls, towers, palace pavilions, studios, windows, and latticework are all made of the seven treasures. The merit, virtue, and adornments of this land are identical to those of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss."

"Residing in that land are two Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas; the first is called Universally Radiant Sunlight, and the second, Universally Radiant Moonlight. They are the leaders among the immeasurable, uncountable hosts of Bodhisattvas in that land and will be the successors to that Buddha. They are able to maintain the precious treasury of the Proper Dharma of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata. Therefore, Manjushri, all good men and women who have faith should vow to be born in that Buddha's land."

At that time, the World Honored One again spoke to the Pure Youth Manjushri saying, "Manjushri, there are living beings who don't distinguish good from evil,

who indulge in greed and stinginess, and who know nothing of giving or its rewards. They are stupid, ignorant, and lack the foundation of faith. They accumulate much wealth and many treasure and ardently guard them. When they see a beggar coming, they feel displeased. When they have to practice an act of charity that does not benefit themselves, they feel as though they were cutting a piece of flesh from their body, and they suffer deep and painful regret.”

“There are other innumerable avaricious and miserly living beings who hoard money and necessities that they don't use even for themselves, how much less for their parents, wives, or servants, or for beggars! At the end of their lives, such beings will be reborn among the hungry ghosts or animals. If they heard the name of that Buddha, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, in their former human existence, and they recall that Tathagata's name for the briefest moment while they are in the evil destinies, they will immediately be reborn in the human realm.

"Moreover, they will remember their past life and will dread the sufferings of the evil destinies. They will not delight in worldly pleasures, but will rejoice in giving and praise others who give. They will not begrudge giving whatever they have. Gradually, to those who come to beg, they will be able to give away their own head, eyes, hands, feet, and even their entire body, to say nothing of their money and property!"

"Moreover, Manjushri, there are beings who, although they study under the Tathagata, nonetheless violate the sila. Others, although they do not violate the sila, nonetheless transgress the rules and regulations. Others, although they do not violate the sila or rules and regulations, nonetheless destroy their own proper views. Others, although they do not destroy their own proper views, nonetheless neglect learning, so they are unable to understand the profound meaning of the Sutras that the Buddha speaks. Others, although they are learned, nonetheless give rise to overweening pride. Shadowed by overweening pride, they justify themselves and disparage others, slander the Proper Dharma, and join the retinue of demons.

Such fools act on their misguided views and further, cause immeasurable millions of beings to fall into pits of great danger. These beings will drift endlessly in the realms of the hells, the animals, and the ghosts. But if they hear the name of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, they will be able to renounce their evil practices and cultivate wholesome Dharmas, and thereby avoid falling into the evil destinies.

If those who have fallen into the evil destinies because they could not renounce their evil practices and cultivate wholesome Dharmas, by the awesome power of the past vows of that Tathagata, get to hear his name for only a moment, then after they pass out of that existence, they will be reborn again as human beings. They will hold proper views and will be ever vigorous. Their minds will be well-regulated and joyful, enabling them to renounce their families and leave the householder's life. They will take up and maintain study of the Tathagata's Dharma without any violation. They will have proper views and erudition; they will understand profound meanings and yet be free from overweening pride. They will not slander the Proper Dharma and will never join the ranks of demons. They will progressively cultivate the practices of Bodhisattvas and will soon bring them to perfection."

"Moreover, Manjushri, if there are sentient beings who harbor stinginess, greed, and jealousy, who praise themselves and disparage others, they will fall into the three evil destinies for countless thousands of years where they will undergo intense suffering. After undergoing intense suffering, at the end of their lives they will be born in the world as oxen, horses, camels, and donkeys that are constantly beaten, afflicted by thirst and hunger, and made to carry heavy burdens along the roads. Or they may be reborn among lowly people, as slaves or servants who are always ordered around by others and who never for a moment feel at ease.

If such beings, in their former lives as humans, heard the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, and by this good cause, are able to remember it and sincerely take refuge with that Buddha, then, by means of the Buddha's spiritual power, they will be liberated from all sufferings. They will be endowed with keen faculties, and they will be wise and erudite. They will always seek the supreme Dharmas and encounter good friends. They will eternally sever the nets of demons and smash the shell of ignorance. They will dry up the river of afflictions and be liberated from birth, old age, sickness, death, anxiety, grief, suffering, and vexation."

"Moreover, Manjushri, there may be beings who delight in perversity and engage in legal disputes, bringing trouble to others as well as themselves. In their actions, speech, and thoughts, they create ever-increasing amounts of evil karma. Never willing to benefit and forgive others, they scheme to harm one another instead. They pray to the spirits of the mountain forests, trees, and graves. They kill living beings in order to make sacrifices of blood and flesh to the yaksha and rakshasa ghosts. They write down the names of their enemies and make images of them,

and then they hex those names and images with evil mantras. They summon paralysis ghosts, cast hexes, or command corpse-raising ghosts to kill or injure their enemies.

However, if the victims hear the name of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, then all those evil things will lose their power to do harm. The evildoers will become kind to one another. They will attain benefit, peace, and happiness and no longer cherish thoughts of malice, affliction, or enmity. Everyone will rejoice and feel content with what they have. Instead of encroaching upon each other, they will seek to benefit one another."

"Moreover, Manjushri, there may be those among the fourfold assembly of Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas and Upasikas, as well as other good men and women of pure faith, who accept and uphold the eight precepts either for one year or for three months, practicing and studying them. With these good roots, they may vow to be born in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss where the Buddha of Limitless Life dwells, to hear the Proper Dharma, but their resolve may not be firm. However, if they hear the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, then as the end of their lives draws near, before them will appear eight great Bodhisattvas, whose names are: Manjushri Bodhisattva, The Bodhisattva Who Observes the Sounds of the World, Great Strength Bodhisattva, Inexhaustible Intention Bodhisattva, Jeweled Udumbara Flower Bodhisattva, Medicine King Bodhisattva, Medicine Superior Bodhisattva, and Maitreya Bodhisattva. Those eight great Bodhisattvas will appear in space to show them the way, and they will naturally be born by transformation in that land, amid precious flowers of a myriad colors."

"Or they may be born in the heavens due to this cause. Although reborn in the heavens, their original good roots will not be exhausted and so they will not fall into the evil destinies again. When their life in the heavens ends, they will be born among people again. They may be wheel-turning kings, reigning over the four continents with awesome virtue and ease, bringing uncountable hundreds of thousands of living beings to abide in the practice of the ten good deeds."

"Or they may be born as ksatriyas, Brahmans, laymen, or sons of honorable families. They will be wealthy, with storehouses filled to overflowing. Handsome in appearance, they will be surrounded by a great retinue of relatives. They will be intelligent and wise, courageous and valiant, like great and awesome knights. If a woman hears the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya

Light Tathagata, and sincerely cherishes it, in the future she will never again be born as a female."

"Moreover, Manjushri, when Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata attained Bodhi, by the power of his past vows he contemplated all the sentient beings who were undergoing various kinds of sicknesses and sufferings. Some suffered from diseases such as emaciation, atrophy, severe thirst, or yellow fever; others were harmed by paralysis ghosts or by poisonous hexes; some died naturally when young, while others experienced untimely deaths. He wished to dispel all these sicknesses and sufferings, and to fulfill their wishes."

"At that time, the World Honored One entered a samadhi called "extinguishing the suffering and distress of all beings." After he entered this samadhi, a great light came forth from his flesh-cowl. From amid that light he proclaimed this magnificent *dharani*:

Na mo bo qie fa di. Bi sha she. Ju lu bi liu li. Bo la po. He la she ye. Da tuo jie duo ye. E la he di. San miao san pu tuo ye. Da zhi tuo nan. Bi sha shi. Bi sha shi. Bi sha she. San mo jie di. Suo he.

After he had spoken that mantra from amid the light, the earth trembled and emitted great light. All beings' sicknesses and sufferings were cast off, and they felt peaceful and happy."

"Manjushri, if you see a man or a woman who is ill, you should single-mindedly and frequently clean and bathe him and rinse his mouth. Provide him with food, medicine, or water that is free of insects, over any of which the *dharani* has been recited 108 times. After the sick person has taken it, all his sicknesses and sufferings will be gone. If this person has a wish, he should recite this mantra with utmost sincerity. Then he will obtain whatever he wished for, and his life will be prolonged and free from illness. At the end of his life, he will be reborn in that Buddha's land. He will become irreversible and will ultimately attain Bodhi. Therefore, Manjushri, if there are men and women who, with utmost sincerity, diligently worship and make offerings to Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, they should always recite this mantra and never forget it."

"Moreover, Manjushri, men or women of pure faith, who have heard all the names of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, One of Proper and Equal Enlightenment, should recite and uphold them. In the early morning, after

brushing their teeth and bathing, they should make offerings of fragrant flowers, incense, perfumed balms, and various kinds of music before an image of that Buddha. They should personally write out this Sutra or ask others to do so, and they should single-mindedly and constantly recite it. If they listen to explanations of its meaning from a Dharma Master, they should make offerings to him of all necessities so that he is without the slightest want. In this way, they will receive the mindful protection of the Buddhas. All of their wishes will be fulfilled, and they will ultimately attain Bodhi."

At that time, the Pure Youth Manjushri said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, I vow that in the Dharma-Image Age, using various expedient means, I shall enable good men and women of pure faith to hear the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata. Even during their sleep, I will awaken them with this Buddha's name."

"World Honored One, there may be those who accept and uphold this Sutra, read and recite it, explain its meanings for others, write it out themselves, or tell others to write it out. They may revere it by making offerings of various flowers, paste incense, powdered incense, stick incense, flower garlands, necklaces, banners, canopies, and music. They may make bags of five-colored thread in which to keep the Sutra. They may sweep clean a place and arrange a high altar on which to place this Sutra. At that time, the Four Heavenly Kings with their retinues and other innumerable hundreds of thousands of gods will come to that place to worship and protect it.

World Honored One, it should be known that if, in the places where this precious Sutra circulates, people can accept and uphold it, then due to the merit and virtue of the past vows of that World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, because they have heard his name, none of those people will meet with untimely death. In addition, none of them will be robbed of his vital energy by evil ghosts and spirits. Those people whose vital energies have already been robbed will have their health restored, and they will be happy and at peace in body and mind."

The Buddha told Manjushri, "So it is, so it is! It is exactly as you say. Manjushri, if there are good men and women of pure faith who wish to make offerings to that World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, they should first make an image of that Buddha and arrange a pure and clean dais on which to place the image. Then they should strew all kinds of flowers, burn various incenses, and adorn the place with a variety of banners and streamers. For seven days and seven

nights they should hold the eight precepts and eat pure food. Having bathed until clean and fragrant, they should put on clean clothes. Their minds should be undefiled, without thoughts of anger and malice. Toward all sentient beings, they should cherish thoughts of benevolence, peace, kindness, compassion, joy, giving, and equanimity.

Playing musical instruments and singing praises, they should circumambulate to the right of the Buddha's image. Moreover, they should recall the merit and virtue of that Tathagata's past vows. They should read and recite this Sutra, ponder its meaning, and lecture on and explain it. Then they will obtain whatever they seek: Those who seek long life will attain longevity; those who seek wealth will gain wealth; those who seek an official position will obtain it; and those who seek a son or a daughter will have one."

"Moreover, if a person who suddenly has nightmares, sees ill omens, notices strange birds flocking together, or perceives many uncanny events in his dwelling can worship and make offerings of many fine things to that World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, then the nightmares, ill omens, and inauspicious things will disappear and will no longer trouble him.

When a person is endangered by water, fire, knives, or poison; or finds himself on a steep cliff or in a dangerous place; or faces fierce elephants, lions, tigers, wolves, bears, poisonous snakes, scorpions, centipedes, millipedes, mosquitoes, gnats, or other frightful things, if he can single-mindedly recollect, worship, and make offerings to that Buddha, he will be liberated from all those frightful things. When other countries invade or when there are thieves or riots, if a person can recollect and worship that Tathagata, then he will be free of all of these as well."

"Moreover, Manjushri, there may be good men and women of pure faith who, all their lives, do not worship other gods, but single-mindedly take refuge with the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. They accept and uphold precepts, such as the five precepts, the ten precepts, the four hundred precepts of a Bodhisattva, the two hundred and fifty precepts of a Bhikshu, or the five hundred precepts of a Bhikshuni. Perhaps they have violated some of the precepts they received and are afraid of falling into the evil destinies. If they concentrate on reciting that Buddha's name and worship and make offerings to him, they definitely will not be reborn in the three evil destinies.

If there is a woman about to give birth who suffers great pain, if she sincerely recites his name and worships, praises, venerates, and makes offerings to that

Tathagata, all her sufferings will be dispelled. The newborn child will be sound and healthy, and will have upright features. Seeing him will make people happy. He will be keen and intelligent, peaceful and secure, and with few ailments; and no evil spirit will come to rob him of his vitality."

At that time the World Honored One said to Ananda, "The merit and virtue of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, which I have just extolled, is the extremely profound practice of all Buddhas. It is difficult to fathom and to comprehend. Do you believe it or not?"

Ananda said, "Greatly virtuous World Honored One, I have absolutely no doubts regarding the Sutras spoken by the Tathagata. Why? Because all Buddhas' karmas of body, speech, and mind are pure. World Honored One, the sun and moon could fall, Wonderfully High, the king of mountains, could be toppled or shaken, but the words of the Buddhas never change."

"World Honored One, there are sentient beings deficient in faith who hear about the extremely profound practices of all Buddhas and think to themselves, 'How could one obtain such supreme merit and benefit merely by reciting the name of a single Buddha, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata?' Due to this lack of faith, they give rise to slander. During the long night, they lose great benefit and joy and fall into the evil destinies, where they wander ceaselessly."

The Buddha told Ananda, "If these sentient beings hear the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, and sincerely accept and uphold it without any doubts, they cannot possibly fall into the evil destinies."

Ananda, this is the extremely profound practice of all Buddhas which is difficult to believe and to understand! You should know that your ability to accept this comes from the awesome power of the Tathagata. Ananda, all Hearers, Solitarily Enlightened Ones, and the Bodhisattvas who have not yet ascended to the Grounds are incapable of believing and understanding this Dharma as it really is. Only the Bodhisattvas who are destined in one life to attain Buddhahood, are capable of understanding.

Ananda, it is difficult to obtain a human body. It is also difficult to have faith in and to revere the Triple Jewel. It is even more difficult to be able to hear the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata. Ananda, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata possesses boundless Bodhisattva practices, limitless skillful expedients, and immeasurably vast, great vows. If I

were to speak extensively of those for an *eon* or more, the *eon* would soon end, but that Buddha's practices, vows, and skillful expedients have no end!"

At that time within the assembly, a Bodhisattva Mahasattva named One Who Rescues and Liberates arose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, knelt with his right knee on the ground, leaned forward with his palms joined together, and said to the Buddha, "Greatly virtuous World Honored One! During the Dharma Image Age, there will be living beings afflicted with various diseases, emaciated from chronic illnesses, unable to eat or drink, their throats parched and their lips dry. Such a being sees darkness gathering all around him as the signs of death appear. While lying in bed, surrounded by his weeping parents, relatives, and friends, he sees the messengers of Yama leading his spirit before that king of justice. Every sentient being has spirits that stay with him throughout his life. They record his every deed, both good and evil, to present to Yama, the king of justice. At that time, King Yama interrogates this person in order to tally his karma and mete out judgment according to his good and evil deeds.

At that time, if the sick person's relatives and friends, on his behalf, can take refuge with the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, and request members of the Sangha to recite this Sutra, to light seven layers of lamps, and to hang up the five-colored banners for prolonging life, then it is possible for his spirit to return. As if in a dream, the person will see everything very clearly himself."

"If his spirit returns after seven, twenty-one, thirty-five, or forty-nine days, he will feel as if awakened from a dream and will remember the retributions that he underwent for his good and bad karma. Having personally witnessed the retributions of his own karma, he will never again do any evil, even if his very life is endangered. Therefore, good men and women of pure faith should accept and uphold the name of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata and, according to their capability, worship and make offerings to him."

At that time, Ananda asked the Bodhisattva Who Rescues and Liberates, "Good man, how should we worship and make offerings to the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata? And how should we make the banners and lamps that prolong life?"

The Bodhisattva Who Rescues and Liberates said, "Greatly Virtuous One, if there is a sick person who wishes to be freed from sickness and suffering, for his sake one should accept and uphold the eight precepts for seven days and seven nights,

and make offerings to the Bhikshu Sangha of as many items of food, drink, and other necessities as are in his power to give.

During the six periods of the day and night one should worship, practice the Way, and make offerings to the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata. Read and recite this Sutra forty-nine times, light forty-nine lamps, and make seven images of that Tathagata. In front of each image place seven lamps, each as large as a cartwheel. These lamps must be kept burning continuously for forty-nine days. Hang up five-colored banners that are forty-nine spans long. Liberate a variety of living creatures, as many as forty-nine species. Then the sick one will be able to surmount the danger and will not suffer an untimely death or be held by evil ghosts."

"Furthermore, Ananda, in the case of *ksatriya* princes who are due to be anointed on the crowns of their heads, at a time when calamity arises, such as pestilence among the population, invasion by foreign countries, rebellion within their territories, unusual changes in the stars, a solar or lunar eclipse, unseasonal winds and rains, or prolonged drought, those *ksatriya* princes should bring forth an attitude of kindness and compassion toward all sentient beings and grant amnesty to all prisoners. They should follow the above-mentioned methods to make offerings to that World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata. Due to these good roots and the power of that Tathagata's past vows, the country will be safe and peaceful, the winds and rains will be timely, the crops will ripen, and all sentient beings will be blissful and free of disease. Within this country there will be no violence, nor any *yakshas* or other spirits that harm sentient beings, and all evil omens will vanish."

"The *kshatriya* princes who are due to be anointed on the crowns of their heads will enjoy longer lives and good health, and they will be at ease and free from illness. Ananda, if the queens, the princes, the ministers or court counselors, the ladies of the palace, the provincial officials or the common people suffer from diseases or other difficulties, they should also hang up five-colored spiritual banners, light lamps and keep them burning, liberate living creatures, strew flowers of various colors, and burn precious incense. Then those people will be cured of their diseases and relieved of their difficulties."

Then Ananda asked the Bodhisattva Who Rescues and Liberates, "Good man, how can a life that has come to an end be prolonged?"

The Bodhisattva Who Rescues and Liberates answered, "Greatly Virtuous One,

did you not hear the Tathagata say that there are nine kinds of untimely death? That is why people are exhorted to make life-prolonging banners and lamps and to cultivate all kinds of blessings. Through such cultivation of blessings, they will be freed from suffering and adversity for the rest of their lives."

Ananda asked, "What are the nine kinds of untimely death?"

The Bodhisattva Who Rescues and Liberates said, "There may be living beings who, although not seriously ill, have neither medicine nor a doctor to treat them, or else they meet a doctor who gives them the wrong medicine; consequently, they meet with an untimely death. Some of them believe in worldly cults, whose deviant teachers frighten them with false prophecies. Unable to set their minds at ease, they consult oracles to find out what calamities are in store for them. In order to propitiate the spirits, they kill various creatures. They pray to *wang liang* ghosts for aid and protection. Although they wish to prolong their lives, their efforts are to no avail. They deludedly hold to wrong beliefs and perverse views. Thus they meet with an untimely death and fall into the hells, never to come out. This is the first kind of untimely death."

"The second kind of untimely death is to be executed at the hands of the law. The third kind is to hunt for sport, to indulge in drinking and lust, or to become excessively dissipated, and then to be waylaid by non-human beings that rob one's essence and energy. The fourth is to be burned to death; the fifth is to drown; the sixth is to be devoured by wild beasts; the seventh is to fall from a steep cliff; the eighth is to be harmed by poison, voodoo, evil mantras, or corpse-raising ghosts; the ninth is to die from hunger and thirst. These are the nine kinds of untimely deaths generally spoken of by the Tathagata. There are also innumerable other kinds which cannot all be spoken of here."

"Moreover, Ananda, King Yama keeps track of the karmic records of all the inhabitants of the world. If there are beings who are not filial to their parents, who commit the Five Rebellious Acts, who revile the Triple Jewel, who destroy the laws of the country, or who violate the precept of truthfulness, then Yama, the king of justice, examines and punishes them according to the severity of their offenses. Therefore, I encourage people to light lamps and make banners, to liberate beings and cultivate blessings so that they can overcome suffering and peril and forestall all disasters."

At that time, twelve great *yaksha* generals were present in the assembly. They were: General Kumbhira, General Vajra, General Mihira, General Andira, General

Anila, General Sandira, General Indra, General Pajra, General Makura, General Kinnara, General Catura, and General Vikarala.

These twelve great *yaksha* generals, each with a retinue of seven thousand *yakshas*, simultaneously raised their voices and addressed the Buddha, "World Honored One! Today, by relying on the Buddha's awesome power, we are able to hear the name of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata! As a result, we are no longer afraid of the evil destinies. All of us are of one mind to take refuge with the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha to the end of our lives. We vow to support all living beings and to benefit them, so that they may live in peace and happiness. In whatever cities, villages, countries, or secluded forests this Sutra circulates, or wherever people accept and uphold the name of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, and venerate and make offerings to him, we, together with our retinues, will guard and protect them, deliver them from all distress, and fulfill all their wishes. If a person wishes to dispel illnesses and difficulties, he should read or recite this Sutra and tie a five-colored thread into knots, forming the letters of our names. He should untie the knots when his wishes have been fulfilled."

At that time, the World Honored One praised the great *yaksha* generals, saying, "Good indeed, good indeed, mighty *yaksha* generals! All of you who want to repay the kindness of the World Honored One, Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata, should always benefit beings and bring peace and happiness to them in this way."

Then Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, what should we call this teaching? How should we uphold it?"

The Buddha told Ananda, "This teaching is called, 'The Merit and Virtue of the Past Vows of Medicine Master Vaidurya Light Tathagata.' It is also called 'Twelve Spiritual Generals' Vows to Use Spiritual Mantras to Benefit Living Beings.' It is also called, 'Eradicating All Karmic Obstacles.' You should uphold it in this way."

When the Bhagavan had finished speaking, all the Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas, great Hearers, kings, ministers, Brahmans, laypeople, gods, dragons, *yakshas*, *gandharvas*, *asuras*, *garudas*, *kinnaras*, *mahoragas*, humans, and non-human beings, and all the great assembly, on hearing what the Buddha had said, were greatly delighted. They received it with faith and respectfully practiced it.