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THE AVATAMSAKA SUTRA

(Epitomised)

CHAPTER I

THUS I have heard. When the World-honored One attained Enlightenment in the forest of Uruvilva, in the country of Magadha, the sala-trees, with all their trunks and branches

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There are three Chinese translations of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* ("Kegon-kyo" in Japanese), and they are distinguished one from another popularly by the number of fasciculi in which they are made up. The earliest one rendered by Buddhahadra and others during the Eastern Tsin dynasty (A. D. 317-420), is known as the "sixty Kegon." The second one was undertaken in the latter part of the seventh century by Sikshananda, of the Tang dynasty (A. D. 618-907), and is called the "Eighty Kegon." This is a much fuller translation than the first, and both of these contain parts corresponding to the Nepalese Mahāyāna texts, the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and the *Dasabhumika*. The third Chinese translation known as the "Forty Kegon" came from the hand of Prajña about a century later than the second. This contains only the last chapter dealing with the pilgrimage of Sudhana in the first two Kegons, but in fuller detail, and is practically the same with the Nepalese *Gaṇḍavyūha*. The Kegon, or Hua-yen-ching in Chinese, is the main text of the Kegon sect, and its philosophy is considered to be the culmination of the metaphysical acumen of Buddhist scholarship. No students of Buddhism can afford to neglect the Kegon if they at all claim to know anything of the Mahāyāna; but the Sutra is such an unwieldy literature to be thoroughly perused by the general reader, and as in the case of other Buddhist texts, it is full of repetitions, which were necessary, in the beginning of the history of Buddhism and especially in India, for the creation of a certain religious atmosphere. Prosaic moderners, however, ask for something concise and directly to the point. Hence the desirability of an abridged text, in which all technicality is avoided as far as possible, and yet in which the spirit of the Sutra is fully preserved. A Japanese digest of the "Sixty Kegon" has been prepared by two competent scholars, Professors Shugaku Yamabe and Chizen Akanuma, under the auspices of the Buddhist Texts Publishing Society, of Nagoya, Japan. The English is by D. T. Suzuki.

and leaves, were turned, through his miraculous virtue, into the seven precious jewels, brilliantly shining; and from his Lion-seat a light which looked like a cloud poured forth all over the ten quarters and illuminated the entire universe.

At that moment, the wisdom of the World-honored One was as deep as the ocean and as far-reaching as space itself; and before its light the darkness of the world vanished, and all sentient beings were led to enlightenment; the universe and all things in it were serenely reflected in his mind even as the starry heavens are mirrored in the sea perfectly calm.

## CHAPTER II

Innumerable Bodhisattvas, Devas, and genii were gathered round the World-honored One, and, inspired with his miraculous power, each praised his virtues with song.

The first Devarāja sang thus :

With the universe, spiritual and infinite,  
The Tathāgata is coextant,  
Eternally calm and undisturbed ;  
But to be the home of all things  
He hath manifested himself on earth.

The Tathāgata hath appeared on earth,  
He hath established the Good Law ;  
His enlightened spirituality knoweth no limits,  
And with his light he subdueth the evil passions of all  
sentient beings,  
And they are given a joy immeasurable.

The second Devarāja sang thus :

By virtue of his power miraculous and incomprehensible,  
Sitting in the midst of the smallest atom,  
The Tathāgata preacheth the doctrine of perfect calmness.

Like the sun disclosing all forms,  
 The Tathāgata, for the sake of sentient beings,  
 Discloseth all forms of karma,  
 And leadeth them into the right way of seeing.

Going through the infinitude of kalpas,  
 He hath practised deeds of love,  
 And according to the vessels we carry  
 He poureth thereinto the rain of the Law.

The third Devarāja sang thus :

Rarely appeareth the Tathāgata on earth,  
 Just once in numberless kalpas ;  
 Overcoming all difficulties and obstacles,  
 Let us attend the gathering to hearn the Law.

Sentient beings are sinking into the sea of evil passions,  
 And their hearts tremble in folly and wickedness ;  
 The Tathāgata full of love will save them,  
 Teaching them a life of holiness and purity,  
 Which he unfoldeth like a heavenly banner.

In each of the rays emanating from the Tathāgata,  
 There sit Buddhas, countless in number,  
 Who with inexhaustible resources  
 Will deliver sentient beings from evil.

The fourth Devarāja sang thus :

The Buddha is pure in form and eternally calm ;  
 While his glory shineth over all the worlds,  
 He himself is calm and formless,  
 The body of the Buddha is like unto a floating cloud.

The inner life of the Buddha is beyond our comprehension ;  
 The Law in which even the innumerable Buddha-lands lie  
     like particles of dust,  
 He preacheth with one voice.

His voice, full of spirituality, reacheth far and near,  
 And sentient beings understand it each in his own way ;  
 And they all think  
 That the Buddha speaketh in one way only as they  
     understand.

The fifth Devarāja sang thus :

Of all the joys in the world,  
 Nothing compares with the quiet joy of the Holy One ;  
 The Good Law, pure and undefiled, is the room where  
     sitteth the Tathāgata,  
 And it is his eye that seeth things as they really are.

All the worlds filling the ten quarters  
 Are manifested even in a single hair of the Buddha ;  
 Verily, the boundless love of the Buddha  
 Is like unto the immensity of space itself.

The arrogance of all beings is as high as a mountain,  
 But the Tathāgata is resourceful and knoweth how to  
     crush it to pieces,  
 Illuminating all the worlds with his light of love.

The sixth Devarāja sang thus :

Dharmakāya is not to be thought of with our worldly  
     intelligence,  
 While the Buddha manifesteth himself everywhere for  
     the sake of sentient beings,  
 This manifestation is a response to conditions ;

It is therefore neither a reality nor a mere fancy :  
 So the Buddha is altogether beyond the ken of human  
 intelligence.

During countless kalpas,  
 The Tathāgata hath practised all the deeds of virtue,  
 In order to remove the darkness of folly in which sentient  
 beings are groping ;  
 How pure and immaculate the wisdom of the Tathāgata!  
 His voice full of spirituality knoweth no comparison ;  
 When it vibrateth, it reacheth far,  
 And the Good Law spreadeth itself all over the ten quarters.

The seventh Devarāja sang thus :

The Tathāgata filleth the universe,  
 But for the sake of defiled beings he sometimes taketh  
 a special form on earth ;  
 In the past he hath accomplished innumerable deeds of  
 virtue,  
 And the pure sea of vows and prayers is now completed.

Sentient beings are binding themselves in the darkness of  
 folly,  
 They are arrogant, act recklessly, and are wildly racing  
 through the world of folly,  
 But the Tathāgata for them preacheth the Law calm and  
 serene,  
 And restoreth them, each and all, to a holy joy and a life  
 of bliss.

The Buddha is our refuge, unsurpassed and peerless,  
 He removeth the sufferings of all beings ;  
 If they desire to see him face to face,  
 He appeareth to them like the full moon over the  
 mountain high.

How pure the inner life of enlightenment and the ocean of  
meritorious deeds !

When karma permits sentient beings to listen to it,  
Their Bodhi (wisdom) is awakened and their defilement  
removed,

And they will at last enter the path of enlightenment.

The eighth Devarāja sang thus :

Throughout the past of countless kalpas,

Evil desires have caused birth and death, which are now  
gone forever ;

The Buddha teacheth us a life of holiness,

He is the light of wisdom.

Birth and death, old age and disease,

Pain and sorrow,—how full of misery this life is !

But let sentient beings once come to the presence of the  
Buddha,

And they come to abide in a world of purity.

The ninth Devarāja sang thus :

Exhausting every means born of love,

The Buddha filleth himself in all sentient beings, who are  
thus controlled by him ;

He who hath opened an eye of purity,

Will see him to his heart's content.

When he thinketh of the Buddha's infinite virtue,

A joy inexhaustible groweth in him,

Which is due to the Buddha's miraculous power.

Think of the Tathāgata even for a moment,

And one will forever be saved from walking into the evil  
paths.

The tenth Devarāja sang thus :

The light of wisdom knoweth no limits,  
 Illuminating all the worlds in the ten quarters ;  
 The Buddha exhausteth every means  
 To make us come unto his presence.

Kalpa after kalpa, and through every form of existence,  
 The Buddha hath practised deeds of virtue and penance—  
 all for us sentient beings ;  
 Behold the light immaculate and as far-reaching as space  
 itself !  
 The spiritual form of the Buddha is manifested even as  
 full as the full moon !

How wonderful ! As the light riseth,  
 The entire universe is illumined,  
 Full of joy and bliss,  
 One's mind is awakened to the Law,  
 Even the blind walking in the darkness of folly,  
 Have their eyes opened to the light of wisdom,  
 And are now able to revere the Tathāgata's form of purity.

The eleventh Devarāja sang thus :

When the great light shineth over all the worlds in the  
 ten quarters,  
 Sentient beings are enabled to see the Tathāgata :  
 The darkness of folly and ignorance is gone,  
 And even the subtlest Law groweth comprehensible.

While sentient beings are not partaking of the joy of the  
 holy ones,  
 But sinking ever deeper in the earthly misery,  
 May they, in the pure Law of the Buddha,  
 Find joy and peace forever !

All existences are empty,  
 But the Buddha is the light of all sentient beings ;  
 The cloud of his love and compassion envelopeth the  
     whole universe,  
 And the shower of the Law leaves no spot unmoistened.

The twelfth Devarāja sang thus :

The ocean of suffering hath no limits,  
 And it is the Buddha alone who emptieth it ;  
 Through the guidance of his love and mercy,  
 Our mental eyes are opened.

Kalpa after kalpa, countless in number,  
 The Buddha hath cleansed the worlds ;  
 With his all-wisdom and incomparable voice,  
 He consoleth all beings, however innumerable.

That innumerable kalpas are conceived as one thought  
 Is due to the virtue of Buddhahood, which remainth  
     forever immovable ;  
 All joys and blessings  
 Are thus imparted to sentient beings.

The king of the Nāgas sang thus :

There are no limits to the most excellent Law of the  
     Buddha,  
 Which is to be likened even unto the bottomless sea ;  
 All that is longed for and desired will be heard  
 From the voice of the Buddha, soft and gentle, yet  
     resounding like thunder.

As the Tathāgata preacheth the Good Law,  
 It filleth all beings with joy ;  
 His voice maketh their hearts leap,  
 For they are rapt with the bliss of the Law.



The king of the Yakshas sang thus :

All beings are heavily burdened with follies  
 And are unable to see the Buddha even once in hun-  
 dreds of thousands of kalpas,  
 And they are suffering through cycles of birth and death;  
 That the Buddha hath now appeared on earth  
 Is to deliver these hapless ones.

In order to save all,  
 The Buddha manifesteth himself before their eyes,  
 And finding his ways in their various lives of karma,  
 The Buddha uprooteth every suffering.

Even the gravest errors and evil effects of karma,  
 Are all removed by the Buddha by his miraculous ways,  
 And all are firmly established in the Good Law.

Throughout innumerable kalpas,  
 The Buddha hath disciplined himself in virtue,  
 And hath given praise to all the Buddhas;  
 And his name now resoundeth through the ten quarters.

The genii sang thus :

While himself serenely sitting on the seat of enlightenment,  
 The Buddha, through his miraculous and indestructible  
 virtue,  
 Manifesteth himself everywhere and anywhere in the  
 universe,  
 And his forms are revered by all sentient beings.

Perfect in form and dignity in every way,  
 And with a light rising like a cloud,  
 The Buddha illumineth the universe which is full of  
 spirituality,  
 And preacheth the Law deep and unfathomable.

## CHAPTER III

At that moment, the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, who had mastered all the doctrines as deep as the sea and full of mysteries, reviewed the whole congregation and praised the Buddha with the gāthās :

Throughout the countless Buddha-lands, all pure and undefiled,  
Forms of purity abound and virtues deep in meaning ;  
Children of the Buddha, free from impurity, are herein gathered,  
Listening always to the voice which proclaimeth the Good Law.

The Buddha sitteth on this Lion-seat,  
And yet manifesteth himself in every particle of dust ;  
Performing various deeds of virtue that belong to the Bodhisattva,  
And preaching with every means miraculous and inscrutable,  
He leadeth all his children to the world of spiritual purity.

With an eye undefiled and immaculate,  
He abideth deeply in the essence of things,  
And yet reacheth the end of the universe which hath really no end ;  
The Buddha-manifestations as numberless as the number of atoms,  
Are teaching all sentient beings also numberless.

In each one of the Buddha-lands,  
The World-honored One equally preacheth,  
And with immaculate means he controleteth all beings,  
Cleansing them of every defilement.

In the Tathāgata-lands as numberless as atoms,  
 The Tathāgata asserteth his authority free and absolute,  
 And with a gentle, melodious tone, reaching wherever  
 there is a holy circle,  
 He preacheth deeds of excellence belonging to the Bo-  
 dhisattva.

All the kalpas past, present, and future, numberless as  
 they are,  
 The Buddha revieweth in one thought ;  
 And the phenomenal world of birth and death, however  
 incomprehensible,  
 The protector of the world verily looketh into its nature.

In the congregation immeasurably large,  
 Children of the Tathāgata are desirous of seeing into the  
 inmost life of Tathāgatahood,  
 Yet they are not in possession of all the holy doctrines  
 limitless in measure.

Verily, the Tathāgata, free from defilement, is like unto  
 space ;  
 He is pure and detached even as is the true essence of  
 things ;  
 An infinitude of beings have now been converted into the  
 faith,  
 And each Buddha attaineth enlightenment under the  
 Bodhi-tree ;  
 With one voice he preacheth on the stages of Bodhisat-  
 tvahood,  
 And treateth exhaustibly of all objects as they appear ;  
 In each of these objects are hidden innumerable ways of  
 deliverance,  
 And no holy doctrines are thus left unpreached.

At that moment, out of the flowers and precious jewels which decorated the Buddha's Lion-seat, there miraculously appeared the Great Bodhisattvas equal in number to that of atoms in a Buddha-land; they showered various kinds of flowers and burned incense with clouds of smoke rising up to the sky. Holy rays emanated from them, various melodies were played, and innumerable jewels came down like rain. When the Great Bodhisattvas made offerings to the World-honored One in such an exalting and inspiring manner, each of them created a lion-seat for himself which was made of precious lotus-petals, and facing the World-honored One sat on it cross-legged.

Then through the Buddha's marvellous power the World of the Lotus Treasure shook in six different ways, and all the kings and rulers of this world made offerings to this great gathering of the holy ones, and thereby their meritorious deeds in the Law were completed. This miracle happened to all the other worlds in the ten quarters just as it did to this one.

*(To be continued)*