

Prabhūtaratna

by Yu Hsi

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Truth and Beauty Coinhere

—— *A Brief Introduction to Prabhūtaratna*

Slowly settle down..... the more you settle down, the more you can taste the real flavor.

Oh! Now more than ever, the world needs a love story of truth, goodness, and beauty.

A love story is something romantic and genuine; it has no need of sorrow and suffering, true as these may be. Such a story is a source of beauty and hope. With the absence of regret and fear, all that remains is a palpable happiness. It's just like the fragrance of early spring, the mist in a secluded glen, the purl of a forest stream, the morning dew in early summer, the autumn sun rising out of the silvery sea—such marvels, such purity of spirit. Youth is a beautiful poem; the heart soars up like some joyous fairy. If you close your eyes and listen, you can hear the sound of the grass breathing on the hillside under the dark sky. This is why I've always believed that out of the darkness of unlimited tribulation, in the end there arises a story of supreme beauty —— .

With faith in happiness, sorrow is removed in a sigh; but even when happy, we can worry that sorrow is on the way.

In the context of the universe, a human life is as ephemeral as the

morning dew. Yet it's still possible to grow, to slowly cultivate awareness and beauty of spirit.

The underlying message of *Prabhūtaratna* is the importance of innocence and sincerity, not just in youth, but throughout one's life.

Prabhūtaratna is a story of hope, like a maiden's indomitable expectation that prince charming is going to come riding out of the woods and sweep her off her feet.

"I have come in response to your devout supplication." *Prabhūtaratna* is about the earnest and heartfelt search for the source of life.

Keyura (a Sanskrit word meaning "a bracelet of precious stones, usually worn on the upper arm") is the embodiment of purity and sincerity, time and again openly weeping when her search comes up empty. It seems that people today have forgotten how to genuinely cry. The end result of this is losing touch with the essence of life.

With a breadth of vision as expansive as a landscape, Yu Hsi's *Prabhūtaratna* can be likened to a painting composed of all that is bright and beautiful between heaven and earth.

The lively sensitivity of youth leaves an indelible impression that can't be effaced by the exigencies of adulthood. This is what makes it possible to see beauty wherever the eye turns, just as the teary-eyed Keyura turns inwards to find brilliance and strength. This is purity, a baptism of the spirit; it puts one in touch with the sentiment of heaven, the smell of the earth.

This is the truth and beauty awaiting the reader in the pages ahead.



The Prospect Garden of Life — Prabhūtaratna

A pair of wise eyes observing all sentient beings, opening the unlimited treasure chest of the universe.

Like a remote, pellucid lake reflecting an infinite array of beauty, Yu Hsi transforms a lovely dream into flying waterfalls which slowly enter the heart, elegantly telling the story of life.

In an earlier age, all living beings were utterly pure, effortlessly soaring amongst the mountains and rivers of the universe. Playfully dancing on the wind, they came to this lovely world of ours, but in their merry wandering forgot the way whence they had come here. Thus they became acquainted with life, perhaps dreaming of being a butterfly with a brilliant halo. Those with the deepest sincerity had the most brilliant luster, but this could only be seen by those with purity of vision. This treasure of purity is very difficult to describe; it's that innate, mysterious ability that people have always been so eagerly in search of.

Knowledge, success, romance, wealth—people spend their lives in the endless pursuit of such illusions, surrogate objects for what they are really looking for. *Prabhūtaratna* represents the Peak Condition, the highest state of being.

In the scriptures of Mahayana Buddhism, *Prabhūtaratna*, a Sanskrit

term meaning “abundant treasure,” serves as a metaphor for the way in which a person with spiritual insight sees the entire world as an open treasure chest of limitless wealth and profundity.

Just where does life come from? What is the ideal way to live? How can one avoid being swept along with the current? How can one overcome the ordinary human condition? *Prabhūtaratna* is the story of that mysterious hometown of the spirit; it leads upstream, back to the source, back to our original home.

A human being is composed of spirit and flesh. At first, the human being is in a state of chaos. Yet, within the universe of the body there is a sound like the wind, a feeling like water, an energy like fire, a solidity like earth, a tranquility like space, a sensitivity like perception, and a pondering like consciousness. These are the seven elements which constitute a sentient being, yet they are not material elements; they have no substance. They are the agents which channel the flow of life. Drawing on the wisdom teachings of Mahayana Buddhism to portray the original appearance of life and the vast, mysterious universe, Yu Hsi personifies these seven elements into the seven characters of this book: The Drunken Guest, Water Jade, Flame, the Ranger, the Sky Youth, Keyura, and Quark.

After the main characters meet up, they set out together in search of the true appearance of life. Arriving in the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound, they encounter seven marvels, and finally obtain that which can always be relied on: the earth-seed from the City of One Hundred



Flowers; the sap of the cinnamon tree at the Palace of the Moon in the Sea of Milk; the seed-lamp in the Closed Water Lily; the wind sealed in the glacial ice; the joyous fairy sealed inside the ancient amber; the thusness ensconced in the seashell sand; and the lifelike but empty illusions produced by the laser beams. All these adventures demonstrate that when you start out with wholesome intentions, and make good use of the powers of wisdom, virtue, and perseverance, then you are sure to arrive at the Peak Condition of life, where you catch a glimpse of the true form of *Prabhūtaratna*.

The Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound is a secret garden open to all. It's like a call from some distant time and place, an Arcadia ensconced amidst the stars, our original home as we wander through the vast universe. Sometimes, in the depth of the night, we catch a glimpse of it in a dream.

Due to a lovely chance encounter which sets in motion her latent potentials and steadfast aspirations, Keyura goes about inquiring into the profound mysteries of the universe, like a stream flowing down from the heavens. Dreams are what make people great. Depicting the beauty of the world requires a good heart. Everything we experience in life is made of mind; it all unfolds from the mind. Keyura's purity of spirit is reminiscent of the sentiment expressed in William Butler Yeats's "A Prayer for my Daughter":

May she become a flourishing hidden tree
That all her thoughts may like the linnet be,
And have no business but dispensing round
Their magnanimities of sound,
Nor but in merriment begin a chase,
Nor but in merriment a quarrel.
O may she live like some green laurel
Rooted in one dear perpetual place.

My mind, because the minds that I have loved,
The sort of beauty that I have approved,
Prosper but little, has dried up of late,
Yet knows that to be choked with hate
May well be of all evil chances chief.
If there's no hatred in a mind
Assault and battery of the wind
Can never tear the linnet from the leaf.

An intellectual hatred is the worst,
So let her think opinions are accursed.
Have I not seen the loveliest woman born
Out of the mouth of Plenty's horn,
Because of her opinionated mind
Barter that horn and every good



By quiet natures understood
For an old bellows full of angry wind?

Considering that, all hatred driven hence,
The soul recovers radical innocence
And learns at last that it is self-delighting,
Self-appeasing, self-affrighting,
And that its own sweet will is Heaven's will;
She can, though every face should scowl
And every windy quarter howl
Or every bellows burst, be happy still.

Every girl is Keyura. With a heart-mind free of impurity, she sees the world as it really is, unlike the other characters in the story, who are biased by fixed views. This is the secret teaching of the Buddha!

The author uses his deep sensitivity to nature to portray the beauty of the universe and the secret of life ——

..... Some flowers have a calyx which doesn't wither and fall off after the flower opens; instead, it remains in place to support the fruit or seeds, and is thus called a "persistent calyx." The underlying message of the Persistent Calyx Garden is that it is through the support of steadfast aspirations that one's innate wisdom manifests itself.

..... Somewhere in the universe there is a clear-flowing river; anyone who looks into it sees his original face.

..... I've heard that the happiest being in the universe is a certain type of fairy.

..... Just as the Kingdom of the Clams is formed out of the patient perseverance of the seashells, the struggles along the path of self-cultivation ultimately give way to splendid results.

Prabhūtaratna is like a vast sea full of excellent treasures, where all things are equal. The River of Life flows across the plains, yet we are mesmerized by the majestic mountain peaks. If only we stop searching and become content with the present moment, then the River of Life appears of itself.

Descartes said, “I think, therefore I am.” *Prabhūtaratna* is the embodiment of our self-nature, our original self. Keyura represents the beauty which exists within the Saha-world (the world of tribulation); the optimal state in life arises out of the original self and the practice of Truth. The meeting of *Prabhūtaratna* and Keyura is a portrayal of the unchanging brilliance of our inner nature. Once the sage scales the lofty peak of the spirit, he returns to the bustle of society to put wisdom into practice; this is the way of the awakened ones.

The Buddha said that compassion gives rise to wisdom. Only through love is truth found; only through truth does strength arise; and only through such strength are great undertakings brought to fruition. This is why truth and beauty always coexist. It's a great pleasure to have the opportunity to write a forward to *Prabhūtaratna*, now appearing



before our eyes like some beautiful dream.

Yu Hsi has an innate gift for conveying the subtleties of Eastern philosophy in a poetic medium, thereby making them more accessible to modern readers. Reading his work can be likened to listening to the sound of a mountain brook or the sound of a chime as it reverberates through space.

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1. Keyura

From time immemorial, Zifangyuan has existed independently, apart from the world of birth, aging, illness, and death; apart from arising, continuity, decay, and disappearance. It's situated amidst the endless mountains and ravines on the periphery of the vast universe. This is a place of incomparable beauty, open only to those with an abundance of merit and wisdom.

In Zifangyuan the plants and trees set off one another in shadow and light; day and night gurgling springs and leaping waterfalls perform a natural symphony. Affectionate flower fairies scatter innumerable precious blossoms amidst the streams, crags, peaks, and plains, mingling with the Chinese wisteria, filling space as far as the eye can see. Remarkable birds and butterflies freely flutter about, sketching out the youthful vitality of Zifangyuan. In this pure place of unlimited appeal, at times the clouds and mist seem to dance out a freehand ink-and-wash painting, sparse, yet overflowing with mystery. This is an Arcadia of immeasurable transformation, its endless charms manifesting as suits each occasion!

“Hurry up, Canary!

Keyura is six years old and is like a flower fairy flitting amongst the blossoms.

When Keyura was born all the wondrous flowers in Zifangyuan danced and greeted her by condensing their delectable and pellucid nectar into gorgeous, flower-shaped beads, formed out of wisdom and sincerity, bursting forth as if from some mysterious greenhouse. A lovely canary with golden wings flits about amongst the multitudes of flowers, collecting the beads of nectar, oozing and cool. Then the Canary strings the beads together, makes them into protective amulets of unsurpassed beauty, and gently places them on Keyura's neck, wrists, and hair.

Keyura has clear, bright eyes, and a radiant, rosy face. Her entire body exudes a delicate fragrance, such that wherever she goes in Zifangyuan all the buds spontaneously open; even the fallen and withered buds open again. Whenever Keyura comes near, each blade of grass, every flower, displays a heightened grace and charm.

Today Keyura and the Canary follow a stream which takes them to a broad, verdant slope. As she excitedly strokes the tender green grass, it forms into a flowing carpet. Curious, the lovely Keyura sits down on the green carpet, and it excitedly bears her up. Laughing like a heavenly maiden, she slides down the green slope. In the sunlight her necklace gives off a brilliant radiance, while the clever Canary follows close behind.

“Canary, hurry up, hurry up! There are lots of beautiful butterflies over here!”



Having slid down into the extraordinary Purple Butterfly Valley, Keyura excitedly calls out to the Canary as she chases after the purple butterflies dancing amongst the ocean of flower thickets.

The Purple Butterfly Valley resembles a labyrinth. Here, winding paths and leaping waterfalls; there, towering cliffs and innumerable flowers..... Delighted, Keyura sports with the butterflies while gathering the flowers..... The purple butterflies flutter about, filling the sky—and the eye—sending Keyura into a playful reverie.

As the shadows cast by the sun slowly fade, signaling the swirling purple butterflies to return to their nests, Keyura, now exhausted, suddenly discovers that the Canary is no longer with her. “Canary, Canary,” she anxiously calls out as she hurries about in search of her constant companion.

It’s now dark, and the hosts of stars are already blinking in the heavens, but the Canary is nowhere to be found. Sad and anxious, Keyura begins to weep, her plaintive sobs reverberating throughout the Purple Butterfly Valley, causing the stars to lose their luster.

Early the next morning, Grandfather Sun returns to the Purple Butterfly Valley to help Keyura find her beloved Canary. However, although he illuminates the entire valley, all that can be found are the alluring butterflies and the beaming flowers; the Canary is nowhere to be found.

Exhausted and dejected, Keyura follows the stream back towards Zifangyuan. Lost in sorrow, she happens upon a place of a thousand-

fold misty mountains—the Clouded Bamboo Forest.

Auspicious clouds embrace an endless expanse of bamboo. Having accidentally entered the Clouded Bamboo Forest, Keyura pokes at the dense bamboo thickets in search of the way back home. Amorphous clouds and mist appear and disappear, playing hide-and-seek with Keyura, by now quite disoriented.

“If only the Canary were here,” sobs Keyura, longing for that bird who always has a way to get her out of a jam.

“Little Girl, don’t worry,” calls out a reassuring voice amidst the bamboo thickets. Hastily looking around in all directions, Keyura catches sight of a youth around twelve years old emerging from the white expanse of fog—the Harp Boy. With a countenance dignified yet relaxed, he somehow gently puts Keyura’s mind at ease. In the midst of the mist-shrouded bamboo forest, she feels as if she is finally in good company. Sparing no details, Keyura tells the Harp Boy—clad in deep green, holding an elegant harp—about how she got separated from the canary, breaking down in tears.

“Little Girl, don’t cry; the Canary will soon return.....” Calmed by the Harp Boy’s reassuring voice, Keyura’s pearl-like tears cease to flow.

Keyura follows the Harp Boy to a ravine in the forest, where he seats himself cross-legged on a boulder and begins to play his harp. As the wondrous strains waft out from the Harp Boy’s dexterous fingers,

sitting next to the babbling brook, Keyura falls into a reverie and bursts into a cherubic smile. As the scent of bamboo wafts through the forest, the Harp Boy and his harp become as one; even the wandering clouds draw close to listen..... Just as Keyura can no longer tell if the music is coming from the harp or from her own mind, the golden Canary suddenly breaks through the mist and flies over to the stream.

“Keyura, Keyura.....”

“Canary —— ” cries out Keyura in excited amazement at the return of her dear friend, greeting him with a hug and a kiss.

2. The Fushan Youth

Day and night, the universe mustered up all its energy, gathered up all that is pure and delightful, and deposited it all at Zifangyuan.

Zifangyuan disseminates a secret meaning, flowing and coalescing in time; it's a place where the wisdom of the universe takes on a graceful bearing, where each tree, flower, stone, and stream reveals its distinctive appearance; where each clod of earth, each bit of air, congeals into an auspicious mood of mutual support, praise, and contrast.

The clever and nimble Keyura has grown up inch by inch, nurtured by all the sentient and non-sentient beings in Zifangyuan, all the while deeply imbibing Truth, Goodness, and Beauty from its springs of life. Like an empress of the flowers, she gathers together all their beauty and radiates it through her captivating visage.

Ever since their brief separation six years ago, Keyura and the Canary have been inseparable. As soon as the birds and beasts in Zifangyuan hear the song of the Canary they begin to frolic, knowing that Keyura, adored by even the grass, is also on the way.

Keyura and Zifangyuan are blessed with the best of everything. Yet Keyura harbors a secret in her heart that she can't forget. For her encounter with the Harp Boy six years ago in the Clouded Bamboo Forest left an indelible impression on her mind, such that, ever since,



she has felt as if she has been cast adrift, with no one to tell her secret to.

Since then, Keyura has been yearning to find her way back to the Clouded Bamboo Forest to find the Harp Boy. With this thought in mind, day after day she and the Canary have been searching Zifangyuan far and wide for the way back to those golden-green bamboos, the Cloudy Bamboo Forest in the endless cloud-capped mountains.

Having already searched every corner of Zifangyuan, hope has given way to despair; tightly knitting her dark black eyebrows, she continuously pines away. With his delicate physique and deeply affectionate eyes, the Harp Boy persistently lingers in Keyura's mind, ever tugging at her heart strings.

The essence of life lies in finding one's own place of peace and happiness, transcending obstacles until the mind comes to rest in its inherent purity.

Ever yearning for the Harp Boy, Keyura finally decides that since no trace of the Clouded Bamboo Forest is to be found in Zifangyuan, then she'll have to search elsewhere, all for the sake of finally being done once and for all with that nagging sense of yearning.

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Layer upon layer of towering peaks, vigorously soaring upwards into

the clouds. Day and night imbibing the essence of the sun and moon, polished to perfection by the wind and rain—this is the incomparably majestic Fushan.

Aged in impermanence, steeped in magnanimity, the mighty Fushan, like a painter yielding an uninhibited brush.

In the clear sky scintillating rays of golden light weave a tapestry fine and delicate. Dancing out its golden hues, ushering the flora and fauna—down to the last blade of grass—into the Kingdom of the Sun to imbibe the energy of life.

Fushan—marvelous peaks, wonderful terraces; ancient pines proudly observing the firmament; musing cedars embracing white clouds; a delicate mist leading all living things in dancing out the infinite rhythms of life.

The ebullient sunlight, the energy of life, leads all beings back to their original face; sky-borne waters moisten the earth, nurturing new growth. As far as the eye can see, Fushan's grassy slopes are traversed by limpid streams, like so many ribbons of jade; budding snow-white clouds ride the wind in all directions, displaying a kaleidoscope of fantastic forms. On the summit, delicate Chinese wisteria hug the pines and show off their purple blossoms, as the glittering and translucent morning dew rolls off the leaves, waking the plants from their deep slumber. Waving in the wind, day and night the vegetation on Fushan imbibes the mountain's nurturing energy.



Carrying a medicine pouch and a bamboo staff, clad in grass sandals, the Fushan Youth pilots his orchid boat along the rapidly flowing rivers, tirelessly scouring the mountains high and low collecting medicinal plants. Whatever he finds, he first tests it out on himself. Distinguished by his large eyes, bushy eyebrows, and stocky build, the Fushan youth has resolved to benefit all sentient beings by becoming the Great Lord of Healing.

During the rainy spring season the Fushan Youth uses a hoe to remove the weeds and turn over the soil on the flat spots scattered around Fushan.

Then he drops seeds of all shapes and sizes from his calloused hands into the dark, moist earth. Under his expectant gaze and diligent care, the seeds slowly become filled with vitality.

Nurtured by the sun and timely rains, no longer able to hold back their vitality, the tender seedlings timidly poke through the earth and take a furtive peek at the world. Braving the blistering sun and pummeling showers, day and night the Fushan Youth goes from plot to plot meticulously removing the weeds and filling in the erosion-damaged patches. Under his watchful eye the innumerable plants gradually grow up, filling Fushan with their fragrance.

Chinaberry, sharp-leafed *sabia*, pole butterflybush, and tuckahoe—these are some of the rare medicinal plants grown by the Fushan Youth. In the fine drizzle of the last month of spring, the Fushan Youth meticulously cares for each plant according to its specific

requirements. He puts up a low trellis for the honeysuckle; prunes the excess branches off the glossy ganoderma. At times, he goes out into the early morning mist to gather pine branches and various grasses, and then boils them in fragrant spring water to make a medicinal concoction.

Year after year the Fushan Youth single mindedly collects and cultivates the medicinal plants which he prepares into herbal medicines. He knows all about the particular characteristics and medicinal use of each plant. He has also come to learn that treating both body and mind is the best way to attain health and happiness.

As a result of the Fushan Youth's selfless efforts, Fushan is now covered in medicinal plants. He was born on Fushan and has dedicated his life to the mountain, turning it into a veritable treasure chest of contentment and health.

He ranges all over Fushan, but owns nothing more than he really needs. When the mountain is at its most beautiful, bursting forth with precious flowers and fruits, he goes about with his pouch and staff, tending to his plots, uncorrupted by worldly affairs.



3. The Mountain Ranger

Having left the supremely beautiful Zifangyuan, Keyura treks through the wilderness and wades across wide streams, all the while led onwards by her unshakable resolve, undeterred by the hardships along the way.

Keyura's eyes radiate a kind of wisdom, as the melodious strains of the Harp Boy grow ever more distinct in her inner ear.

Accompanied by the Canary, Keyura arrives at Fushan and is taken aback by its natural splendor—craggy peaks, old pines, flying waterfalls, and fragrant breezes.

While Keyura and the Canary are marveling at the extraordinary sights, suddenly dense, dark clouds move in, thunder begins to rumble, and a powerful storm descends on Fushan.

“Keyura, let's get out of here; the river is about to flood!” urges the Canary.

As ferocious wind and rain pound Fushan, Keyura and the Canary scramble about in search of shelter as the sky grows ever darker.

After some time, the storm expends its energy, but not before scaring off the stars and moon.

Now lost in the pitch black, chilly night, the loyal Canary vainly flies about in search of the way out of the mountains, nervously aware that

by now Keyura is thoroughly exhausted.

“Canary, if we were in Zifangyuan, we would have lots of friends to help us out of this mess,” says Keyura with a deep sigh.

“Don’t worry, Keyura; as soon as it’s light, we’ll find the road,” says the Canary, falling silent as he recalls all their good friends back at Zifangyuan—the grasshoppers, butterflies, and rabbits—and all the fun they’ve had together.

After the storm, the night is so dark that Keyura can’t see her hand in front of her face. Yet, led on by her unshakable determination to find the Harp Boy, Keyura pushes on, groping about for the road. Suddenly, her necklace flashes, illuminating the Canary, who immediately begins singing a lovely melody.

“Canary, come quick! Fireflies!” Keyura calls out, as if she has found some priceless treasure. The Canary, however, pays no attention and just keeps on singing his song.

The Canary’s lovely song reverberates throughout the mountains, eventually finding its way to the distant Zifangyuan. Summoned by the Canary’s call, throngs of fireflies fly up from Zifangyuan and follow the resonant sound through the pitch black night, over peak and dale, finally arriving at Fushan. Like a bevy of glittering stars descended to the earth, the fireflies form into a miniature Milky Way and then disperse.

Attracted by the Canary’s song, one by one the affectionate fireflies



draw near.

“Look! The fireflies have lit up the path!” Keyura exclaims with great delight.

The fireflies form into two orderly columns on either side of the path to illuminate the way for Keyura—and warm her heart.

The fireflies’ splendid glow accompanies the Canary’s lovely song to form a magnificent sound-and-light show on that midsummer night on Fushan.

Led forward by the Canary’s song and the fireflies’ guiding light, Keyura quickly makes her way towards the flat, broad grassland.

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“Eh? What’s that strange light over there?” wonders the Mountain Ranger as he lifts his telescope to his eye for a closer look.

“What? —— Fireflies! I’ve never seen such a strange sight on Fushan. They’re all flying single file in two orderly columns!” says the Ranger, bubbling over with curiosity.

Thereupon he swiftly takes up his bag and sets off to investigate.

Illuminating Keyura’s way, the long and graceful Milky Way of fireflies disperses a silvery white gauze all about.

“Canary, the fireflies are tired out,” says Keyura concernedly.

“Keyura, as soon as we get to the broad grassland up ahead, the fireflies can go back and take a rest,” replies the Canary.

Hearing Keyura's thoughtful words, the fireflies fly on full speed ahead, soon arriving at the largest grassy meadow on Fushan.

"Keyura, I think there's somebody up ahead," says the Canary upon hearing the sound of muffled footsteps.

Keyura stops and listens.

"Who's there?" calls out the Ranger, faintly making out a slim and graceful young girl surrounded by innumerable fireflies.

"Canary, there's somebody here!" exclaims Keyura, stepping back, startled by the sudden voice from the darkness.

Sensing Keyura's fright, the fireflies swarm around her, forming a protective shield.

Illuminated by the auspicious glow of the fireflies, Keyura resembles a celestial fairy fluttering in the Milky Way. The precious ornaments adorning her hair, neck, and wrists radiate a splendid hue, her lotus-like visage beaming with affection. As if rooted to the ground, the Ranger stares in amazement.

The Canary quickly flies over.

"Who are you?" Keyura reassuringly calls out in a clear and melodious voice, bringing the Ranger back to his senses.

"Er — — ugh — — I'm in charge of safety here on Fushan; you — are you a celestial fairy?" the Ranger replies with a stammer.

"I'm not a fairy. I'm Keyura; I was caught in the storm and got lost," replies Keyura with a slight smile.

"Zi — zi — zi — " Suddenly, a sorrowful sound emerges from



the darkness of a nearby ravine.

“An animal is injured. Keyura, you’d better stay put; Fushan is no place for walking around in the dark. Wait here; I’ll be right back,” says the Ranger before running off into the dark. Alerted to the seriousness of the situation by his urgent steps, Keyura can’t help but follow the Ranger to see for herself.

“Zi — zi — ”the sound gets louder. While Keyura is still trying to figure out what’s happened, the Ranger suddenly plunges into the river. By now the sound is coming from all directions, and Keyura calls out, “Fireflies, come quickly and help the Ranger!”

After waiting in the darkness for some time, Keyura and the Canary finally see the Ranger, carrying a small macaque gasping for breath, illuminated by the fireflies as he ascends the bank.

“He’s hurt pretty bad. I have to quickly take him for treatment; you’d better come with us,” advises the Ranger while gently holding the Macaque. Impressed by his kindness toward animals, Keyura follows the Ranger back to his abode.

Within a few days, the Ranger lovingly nurses the Macaque back to health, during which time Keyura learns quite a lot about how to take care of animals.

Before long, the Macaque makes a full recovery and becomes the Ranger’s constant companion, accompanying him like a shadow, night and day, rain or shine.

Having been born and raised on Fushan, the kindly Ranger is a friend of all the birds and beasts on the mountain. If they ever run into trouble, all they have to do is call out for help, and the Ranger immediately comes to the rescue, rather like a bodhisattva. Yet, after meeting Keyura, he has unwittingly discovered a feeling he has never felt before.

Ever since leaving Zifangyuan, this is the first time Keyura has felt really in touch with life. Day and night she endlessly goes about helping the Ranger take care of the animals. Every time they rescue an animal and then lovingly nurse it back to health, Keyura feels indescribably happy.

In this way she has gradually come to understand the meaning of life.



4. The Song of the Harp Boy

Nonetheless, Keyura can't forget about the Harp Boy, the beauty of Fushan and the Mountain Ranger's affection for her notwithstanding. The longer she stays in Fushan, the stronger her desire to find the Harp Boy.

During this time, the Mountain Ranger has come to learn that, in addition to her angelic appearance, Keyura also has a pure, compassionate heart. Despite constantly looking after the animals in Fushan, she never gets tired; indeed, she derives great joy from her work. This is why the Ranger holds her in such high esteem. Yet, he has noticed that at times Keyura seems to be lost in thought, as if she is troubled by some kind secret sadness buried deep in her heart.

Early one drizzly morning, having just dreamed about the Clouded Bamboo Forest, Keyura wakes up to the splendid sight of dense clouds hovering over the mountain peaks, causing her to yearn for the Harp Boy, whom she imagines to be serenely seated amongst the clouds.....

"Canary! I saw it; I saw the Clouded Bamboo Forest!" Keyura excitedly calls out while running towards the mountain, startling the Ranger.

“Keyura, what’s wrong?”

“I saw the Clouded Bamboo Forest! That’s where the Harp Boy is! Ranger, come quick; give me a hand,” Keyura urgently calls out while pointing into the distance.

The Ranger takes a good look at the peak Keyura is pointing towards, but all he sees are misty clouds surrounding the summit.

“Keyura, what’s the Clouded Bamboo Forest? Who is the Harp Boy?”

As the morning sun and breeze gradually disperse the dense clouds around the summit, Keyura tearfully looks on as the image of the Harp Boy disappears. Now that the cat is out of the bag, Keyura tells the Ranger all about her infatuation with the Harp Boy, and entreats him to assist her in her quest.

At first, the Ranger is profoundly dejected by the news, as if he’s tumbled into some deep, dark valley. Afterwards, however, moved by her purity of heart and unshakable sense of mission, he comes to realize that only the Harp Boy holds the key to Keyura’s heart.

Fushan is like an inscrutable sage. Though a native of Fushan, the Ranger has no fixed abode. Instead, for twenty some years he has been continually patrolling its many slopes and valleys while looking after the wild animals. Yet, the Fushan Range is so vast that there are some parts that even he has never been to.

Now, however, this is about to change; for the Ranger, accompanied by the Macaque, has agreed to lead Keyura deep into the heart of the



Fushan Range and help her search for the Harp Boy.

The vast and majestic Fushan range many faces. Day in and day out, the Ranger leads the way, happily blazing new trails and discovering new places of profound beauty. Yet, nary a trace of the Clouded Bamboo Forest is to be found, much to Keyura's chagrin.

Then, one afternoon in the middle of fall, they climb over yet another ridge and find themselves in a lovely glen carpeted with wildflowers.

Exhausted by the long and arduous trek, they decide to rest in this lovely glen for a few days before continuing their search.

That night, the moon is especially bright, at times illuminating the layers of clouds so that they appear like floating, golden-yellow mountains.

Whenever Keyura falls fast asleep, the Ranger enjoys quietly gazing at the moon or contemplating the stars scattered big and bright throughout the night sky. Then he begins to think about all the animals on the mountain..... sometimes he reminisces about how happy he was the first time he met Keyura..... Strangely, every time he reminisces like this he starts to hear the faint sound of the Harp Boy. At first he thought it must be some kind of hallucination, but ever since they arrived in this glen he always hears it late at night, making him think that the Clouded Bamboo Forest is nearby. He hasn't told Keyura, so as not to give her false hope. Instead, his sorrow mingled with joy, for several nights in a row, he's listened closely to the sound, and now he's sure that it's for real. Tonight he again hears the

Harp Boy's enchanting melody and wakes Keyura up from her deep slumber:

“Keyura, Keyura.”

Keyura slowly wakes up.

“Keyura, listen closely.”

The thin clouds lightly embrace the moon and move on as the music wafts through the autumn sky and into the secluded glen.

“It's the Harp Boy,” Keyura says, eyes welling up with tears.

“Ranger, the Harp Boy is nearby.”

As the intermittent sound plays Keyura's heart strings, she urges the Ranger to lead her out to search for the Harp Boy.

Then the Ranger quickly leads Keyura in the direction of the music, alongside a stream, with the Canary flying out in front. As they follow the wide, rushing stream the ethereal sound becomes increasingly distinct; it seems to be coming from the next mountain range. By now Keyura is excitedly leading the way, with the Ranger struggling to keep up. After some time the moon disappears, leaving the night sky all to the few scattered stars.

“Keyura, don't run up ahead in the dark; it's dangerous!” warns the Ranger from behind, noticing that the terrain is getting steeper. He knows from experience that it's very difficult to walk on mountain paths in the dark.

“Ranger, the sound of the Harp Boy is coming from up ahead; just a bit further and we might find him,” Keyura calls out in the dark, eyes



flashing with anticipation.

Fearing only that the sound of the Harp Boy's music will disappear before she finds him, Keyura rushes ahead into the darkness.

But the sound of the Harp Boy begins to fade, melding with the increasingly strong rush of the stream, taking with it Keyura's excited joy.

On Keyura goes, up the dark, circuitous ravine, trying to trace the music reverberating from all directions, as the Ranger grows increasingly concerned.

Before long, the music disappears altogether, whereupon Keyura can't hold back her tears.

"Keyura, don't worry; the Harp Boy's music was coming from behind that mountain. All we have to do is find the path going over the pass and we're sure to find the Clouded Bamboo Forest."

Calmly reviewing their route, the Ranger leads Keyura out of the precipitous ravine.

5. *Quark*

As the faint morning light begins to filter through the ashen clouds, Keyura, now rested, urges the Ranger to help her find the route to the other side of the mountain.

Making their way through the narrow ravine, they are amazed to discover that everything they see looks as if it were meticulously laid out by some unknown hand, right down to the last stone and flower. They also notice that every plant is neatly adorned with a red ribbon waving in the cool morning breeze. Confronted with such a strange sight, the Ranger spontaneously says:

“I’ve always felt that Fushan is so beautiful that it doesn’t require any human adornment, and that it’s so magnanimous and accommodating that it allows pretty much anything under the sun to just be itself.”

“I don’t think we’re on Fushan anymore. It looks as though we’re now on some other mountain,” wonders Keyura out loud.

“Fushan is so vast that even if you spent an entire lifetime traversing it, you still wouldn’t be able to visit every part.”

While walking with Keyura through this peculiar, semi-natural landscape, from time to time the Ranger stops to inspect the information written on the ribbons: serial number; date; names; characteristics; uses.....

He’s hoping to find some clues.

After passing through a large tract of trees with ribbons attached, they see a large, dark-green lake illuminated by the rays of the sun. By the way the wind makes small ripples on its surface they surmise that this is the only completely natural element on this mountain. Putting their apprehensions aside for the moment, they stop to rest.

“Hey — who are you? And what are doing messing around in my place?” a stern voice calls out from a copse next to the lake.

Before long, from out of the copse emerges a handsome youth with a square gadget giving off a silvery-white glow hanging on his chest. As he walks straight towards them the Ranger steps forward and says:

“Please excuse us. We’ve lost our way and have come here by accident.....”

“Well, since you came here by accident, then I guess it’s alright. I’m Quark; who are you?” he asks while sizing them up.

“I’m the Mountain Ranger and this is Keyura.”

Forthwith, Quark leads them into a fantasy realm — .

Though still a youth, Quark has compiled a vast amount of knowledge. For this is his way of searching for the spark of life — — the mysterious fountain of the spirit.

Quark is obsessed with numbers, as quickly becomes apparent to everyone who meets him. From dawn to dusk, and even in his dreams, he continually uses his sharp mind to measure and compare everything in the universe.

Even more unusual is the CD-ROM drive he always has hanging from his neck and resting on his chest. It can expand and contract, and holds the largest CD-ROM in the universe, on which is stored every sort of information you could imagine, all entirely up to date.

Having always lived on Fushan, Quark is amazed by its vastness and plethora of natural resources. Assisted by his CD-ROM drive, he spends all his time making meticulous calculations to determine which plants to cultivate and the most efficient and effective ways to exploit Fushan's resources.

Day and night, he calculates and compares the past and expected results, which he then writes on red ribbons and attaches them to the plants. This is how he spends his time, all in the hope that someday Fushan will become a highly developed state—with himself as its leader.

Having met Keyura and the Ranger, he can't help but regard them as part of his grand plan. Day and night he tells them all about how to make various sorts of quantitative analyses so as to derive the greatest benefit.

Today, Quark takes the Ranger and Keyura with him on his customary inspection tour. In order to maximize the yield, Quark has densely planted together a great variety of plants which grow in different seasons. Proudly peering out over the flourishing, extensive tracts, Quark has the air of a tycoon showing off his wealth.

Forthwith, Quark opens up the CD-Rom drive hanging on his chest,

presses a few buttons, and out comes a numerical printout.

“Look! Here are the results of all my hard work on Fushan!” Quark exclaims with obvious pride. As he shows them around, Quark excitedly points out various details—the height, age, and expected yield of each plant; which areas are suitable for development; and which plants are most profitable.

Having gone about with Quark the whole day, the Ranger and Keyura are exhausted by the time the stars have come out. They were expecting that once it got dark, Quark would take them back to his luxurious abode for a rest, but their hopes are soon dashed to pieces.

“If I can calculate the number of stars in the sky, won’t that put me in possession of yet another kind of treasure?” Quark says as he excitedly pulls out his gadget and begins using it to count the stars.

“That one that looks like a ladle, that’s the Big Dipper; it changes its direction according to the season. And that’s the Cowherd and the Weaver Girl; there’s a touching story about them.....”

Quark goes on relating to the Ranger and Keyura the information provided by his gadget, right down to the last detail.

“1,001, 1,002, 1,003.....,” counts Quark, surveying the sky from south to north.

“It’s said that everyone belongs to a certain constellation. Those born between October 24 and November 22 belong to the lucky constellation of Scorpio. Scorpios are smart and charismatic.....” says Quark, operating the gadget’s keyboard and talking non-stop.

“Gemineans are versatile and quick witted.....”

As Quark goes on with his exhaustive inventory, Keyura and the Ranger begin to feel as though all the stars are somehow drawing nearer. Suddenly, the starlight forms into a great river flowing towards them with great momentum. Before they can decide if it’s real or not, a golden light in the sky begins to rapidly flicker, and amongst the constellations there appears a strange image: $22 \div 7$.

“Ah! The cosmos; it’s vast, endless!” Quark excitedly calls out as the bright stars come pouring down, as if time and space were moving in unison. Just as the Ranger and Keyura are about to run for cover, the earth trembles and all the stars begin dropping downwards.

Now all they can do is look on in amazement as wave upon wave of innumerable stars come falling down. Then the earth begins to sink in. Just as they are about to plummet into a chasm which has opened in the earth, there appears amongst the stars a marvelous spectrum of light consisting of seven overlapping colors. The kaleidoscope of color draws near, and the Ranger and Keyura look on in terror as a huge peacock emerges out of the blazing light. Forgetting her fright, Keyura sticks out her hand to pet the splendid peacock.

“Keyura, be careful!” the Canary calls out, whereupon the peacock suddenly turns into a flame-red phoenix and the seven-colored spectrum becomes dark red. Just as the Ranger and Keyura are wondering what to do, the stream of stars swiftly flows downwards.....

The stream of stars rapidly flows all over.

The frightful sound gets increasingly louder, but when it is nearly unbearable, it completely ceases. Spun around by the current, the Ranger and Keyura are dizzy.

After some time they come out of it.

“Wow —— ” they exclaim in unison as they gaze out upon the pure and refreshing lapis lazuli world which has appeared before their eyes. Dumbstruck by the rapid turn of events, they cautiously set out to have a look around this peaceful and auspicious place. As the first light of day comes forth, they discover that somehow they’ve entered a place which resembles the Clouded Bamboo Forest.

“This place looks like the Clouded Bamboo Forest,” Keyura whispers.

“What a strange place; it may be the place you are looking for, but.....” they say in hushed tones, wary of falling into yet another predicament.

Overcome by curiosity, they noiselessly walk further into the heavy mist, reassured by the moisture-laden clouds. Everything is enveloped in a mist; all they can see is that there are streams and mountains and lots of flowers and rocks.

“Keyura, come quick.”

Following the Canary, his wings vigorously flapping in the mist, Keyura and the Ranger quickly move deeper into the forest. Before long, the mist becomes thinner and they suddenly find themselves in the mysterious Lapis Lazuli Garden, replete with transparent lapis lazuli flowers.

After silently pushing aside the mist, the sun lightly strokes the transparent lapis lazuli flowers spread throughout the garden. Keyura and the Ranger are taken aback at an amazing sight—a group of young boys identical in appearance: tufts of hair between their eyebrows; hair tied in five topknots; and clothed in loose, green attire. Each holds a long-handled broom fashioned out of transparent lapis lazuli and uses it to sweep the transparent leaves from the jeweled path.

As the gentle breeze and first rays of light lovingly caresses their smiling faces, the cherubic boys briskly sweep between the transparent flowers, which produce celestial tones when bumped by the brooms. Soon the sparse beauty sinks in and slowly dispels their apprehension.....

*

Gauzy clouds brush against ancient pines, tops draped with mist thrown forth by a flying waterfall which comes to rest in a bluish-green pool halfway up the mountain. The pool is adorned by elegant alpine vegetation hugging the crags; several white cranes stretch their legs and dance below the waterfall.

Some time ago, in an out-of-the-way corner of the universe, the Clouded Bamboo Forest came into being on the boundary between heaven and earth. Attracted by its simple purity and natural beauty, a certain cloud fairy has taken up residence here and spends the whole

day admiring the excellent scenery. It's also inhabited by the Three Elders of the Universe—Baosheng, Tiangu, and Bianzhao—who spend their leisure time drinking tea next to a pool. The tea is made from ancient tea leaves collected from the cloudy peaks by their three disciples—Purple Robe, Prabhūtaratna, and Padmaprabha.

“Padmaprabha, come quick!” calls out Purple Robe, attired in a magnificent purple-gold robe and treading on purple-gold lotuses. In the early morning he and Prabhūtaratna—a tuft of hair between his eyebrows, hair bound in five topknots, and holding a lapis lazuli broom—detected the delicious scent of tea, and are now in a hurry to take the junior Padmaprabha with them to pay their respects to their teachers next to the pool.

“Purple Robe; Prabhūtaratna—wait up!” calls out Padmaprabha, his two pigtails flying up as his short legs struggle to take him along the rough mountain path. Then he turns a corner and Prabhūtaratna and Purple Robe are nowhere to be seen amongst the fog, even though his big round eyes are wide open, making him anxious.

“Hey — — hey! — — there's a purple-golden light coming from Purple Robe's body!” says Baosheng smiling and stroking his long white beard.

“The tuft of white hair between Prabhūtaratna's eyebrows is becoming clearer by the day,” says Bianzhao as if thinking of something, his tall

physique covered in the long, golden-yellow robe he wears year round.

“Ah, really fine tea!” says Tiangu, sipping fragrant tea while waving his fan. Today he is uncharacteristically garrulous:

“These three youngsters sure are getting better at recognizing the flavor of the human world. Although still quite young, Padmaprabha already has breadth of mind and a keen sense of vision; it seems that our efforts haven’t been wasted on him.”

“Now that they are nearly grown up, I suppose we might want to have them leave the mountain a little early and attend to their duty,” says Baosheng, while the two other Elders nod in agreement, as their three disciples caper towards the pool.

“Prabhūtaratna, Purple Robe, Padmaprabha. In a few days time you will have to leave the Clouded Bamboo Forest,” says Bianzhao.

“Master, where are you sending us?” asks Padmaprabha.

“Your purpose in going to the human realm is to find Truth. This is something you have to do for yourself; your teacher can’t do it for you,” says Bianzhao with a smile while stroking Padmaprabha’s head.

“But why do we have to go looking for Truth?” asks Purple robe confusedly.

“Truth is what helps you overcome karmic fetters and realize your unlimited potential. It’s only after finding Truth that you can be of benefit to all sentient beings,” says Baosheng before taking a sip of tea, giving Prabhūtaratna a chance to interject:

“Just what is Truth? And how do we find it.”

“My boys, you must be sure to remember one thing: Truth never appears alone; it can only be found together with Beauty. Only when adorned by Beauty, can Truth have a powerful and widespread effect,” explains Tiangu with a nod.

Just then, a fog bank comes down from the waterfall and covers the placid surface of the pool, as the boys’ jovial mood gives way to misgivings.

“Prabhūtaratna, Purple Robe, and Padmaprabha. Long ago there was a Buddha known as “This-world Tathagata.” He had a fine time singing, dancing, and traveling around while the flowers were blooming in the spring. At that time, the endless foggy mountains and flower-bordered streams formed into a painting known as Streams and Mountains without End. Then, in his enjoyment, This-world Tathagata so forgot himself that he became a part of the scene depicted in Streams and Mountains without End. Afterwards, the painting was obtained by a collector who, without knowing the actual situation, printed it in a volume know as the Luminous Purple Jade, which is now stored amongst the dust of the Great Chiliocosm.”

Seeing a confused look on the boys’ faces, Bianzhao continues:

“My boys, that’s where you’ll find Truth, in Streams and Mountains without End. After leaving the mountain, all you have to do is find that painting, and then you can return to the Clouded Bamboo Forest.”

Upon hearing all this, knowing that he will have to leave the Clouded Bamboo Forest and his teacher, Padmaprabha blurts out:

“If Truth is so hard to find, why are we in such a hurry to find it?”

“My boy! All things come about through causes and conditions. When the opportunity presents itself, then it’s time to meet it with courage,” says Baosheng.

“Yes, Truth is not easily found. Yet, as long as you approach your task with a pure heart and with wisdom; as long as you practice virtue and keep your feet on the ground, then Truth and Beauty will appear when the time is right,” exhorts Tiangu over the sound of the nearby waterfall.

Hearing the earnest exhortation of the Three Elders, the three disciples gradually come to understand the nature and importance of Truth, as a misty feeling of anticipation gradually builds up in their hearts.

6. Flame

While searching all over the vast Fushan for the Harp Boy, Keyura and the Ranger came across the clever Quark. However, while Quark was carrying out his calculations, they nearly fell to the bottom of the universe. Then, just as they were losing hope of ever getting out, a flaming phoenix appeared and transported them to the Lapis Lazuli Bamboo Grove.

In the Lapis Lazuli Bamboo Grove they see a group of identical boys, each holding a broom made of lapis lazuli and happily sweeping away the transparent leaves. As they stare in amazement at the strange and beautiful surroundings, a young maiden whose entire body radiates seven colors of light silently comes up behind them.....

“This sure is a strange place, isn’t it?” calls out a bell-like voice, breaking into the silence and startling the Ranger and Keyura. Turning around in unison, they discover standing right behind them a radiant maiden. Taken aback, they blurt out:

“Huh! Who are you?”

“Don’t worry! I’m called Flame. That flaming phoenix you saw earlier is one of my manifestations,” replies the resplendent maiden.

“You’re the flaming phoenix?” says the Ranger, thinking back to the blinding spectacle of rapidly changing light.

“That’s right; that was me,” answers Flame, drawing close. However,

Keyura, still apprehensive, clutches the Canary and steps back.

“Keyura, don’t worry. That flaming phoenix may have looked rather frightful, but it was just something I transform into by gathering together the energy of the fire element spread throughout the universe,” explains Flame, her dazzling radiance following her footsteps. Sensing Keyura’s fright, the Ranger stands in front, with the ever-loyal Macaque at this side chirping out, “zi — zi — zi —” Sensing their apprehension, Flame stops approaching, thinks for a moment, and gently says:

“I’m really sorry. I know that my brilliant rays can be a bit overwhelming, but I was only trying to save your lives.”

Thereupon, Flame tones down her radiance, revealing to Keyura and the Ranger that in fact she is a lovely maiden! Clad in a seven-colored garment of feathers, her comely face has the luster of lapis lazuli and is punctuated with a pair of bright, charming eyes that quickly put Keyura and the Ranger at ease.

“Thank you for saving us,” says the Ranger.

Seeing that their fear has subsided, Flame is overjoyed. With a kindly glimmer in her eyes, she begins to fondle a transparent-red phoenix dangling from the end of her hair. Suddenly remembering something, she slowly pulls out of her feather dress an exquisite hair clasp in the form of a phoenix and kindly hands it to Keyura.

Her apprehension now assuaged, Keyura cordially accepts the gift and bashfully asks:

“Do you live here?”

“Heavens, no! I don’t live here.”

“Just what is this place? And why are all the plants and trees transparent?” the Ranger curiously asks.

“This is the Lapis Lazuli Bamboo Grove, an auspicious place of purity and joy. And those lovely little boys are little Prabhūtaratnas,” Flame kindly replies.

“Prabhūtaratnas?” Keyura wonders.

“Why do they all look exactly the same,” asks the Ranger, as the three extraordinary boys come running out from amidst the transparent vegetation.

“Look! Who are they?” asks Keyura excitedly.

“They are the future masters of this place. Their names are Purple Robe, Prabhūtaratna, and Padmaprabha,” explains Flame.

“We waved to them earlier. This place seems a lot like the Clouded Bamboo Forest, and we thought that they might be able to tell us something about the whereabouts of the Harp Boy,” says Keyura urgently to the Ranger.

Sensing Keyura’s intent, the Canary flies over to the three boys. Seeing the situation, Keyura can’t wait for the Ranger’s reply, and steps forward, closely followed by the tongue-tied Ranger.

7. Persistent Calyx Garden · Night Halt Heaven

“Keyura — — Ranger — — Quickly come up to the Boundless Summit!” a voice calls out from a distant peak.

Suddenly, the Lapis Lazuli Bamboo Grove begins to fade away, as if it were just a dream. Despite their protests, all Keyura and the Ranger can do is watch as it disappears, leaving Keyura anxious and despondent.

“The Lapis Lazuli Bamboo Grove can only be seen by those with a completely pure mind. Keyura, you are very fortunate to have had a glimpse of the Lapis Lazuli Bamboo Grove, but now that the conditions have passed, it has disappeared. Come, it’s time to leave,” Flame consoles them while quickly coming to Keyura’s side.

“Flame — — quickly bring them to the top of the Boundless Summit ——— ”

The voice calls out again, causing Keyura and the Ranger to peer up towards the summit, where they see amongst the peaks a boy stepping on colorful clouds and a wearing loose pants and a short-sleeved shirt printed with ruyi designs. His shoulder is draped with a colorful ribbon fluttering in the breeze. Puzzled, Keyura asks:

“Who is that? And why does he look so unusual?”

“That is Sudhana, the boy with plenty of wholesome roots. He may be young, but he’s already visited innumerable worlds to receive



teachings from all the great sages.”

“Look! There are colorful clouds wafting out all around him!” says the Ranger in amazement.

“When Sudhana was born, all sorts of treasures appeared all around him, just like those clouds you see around him now,” says Flame admiringly.

“Isn’t that something; surely that summit he stays on is no ordinary mountain,” says Keyura pensively, then saying expectantly, “Flame, take us up there.”

Sensing Keyura’s eagerness and perplexity, and not wanting her to be disappointed again, Flame extends her radiant hand and waves to Sudhana on the summit. Then she expands her feather dress and surrounds them in a warm light which envelops their entire field of vision. At the same time, they all have a feeling of indescribable peace.

“Si — — ” Thereupon, as they hear a strange sound, the enveloping light fades away and Flame’s graceful form becomes increasingly clear.

“We need to quickly go up to the Boundless Summit,” says Flame, as the light emanating from her feather garment gradually shrinks. After the light disappears, Keyura and the Ranger begin to make out the verdant color of the mountain and then find themselves on its summit.

“Zi — — zi — — zi — — ” chirps the excited Macaque, eyes fixed on branches laden with innumerable fruits, some emerald green, others cornelian red, all plump and fragrant.

“Wow — — ” declares the Ranger, who in all his time roving about these mountains has never seen a place quite as splendid as this.

“Keyura, Ranger, you have come at last,” says Sudhana from amidst clusters of gem-like flowers, standing on auspicious clouds, smiling and waving as if greeting old friends.

Seeing that Keyura and the Ranger are pleasantly surprised but at a loss as to what to do, Flame cordially leads them over to the cluster of flowers.

“Flame, it’s a good thing you brought them up to the Boundless Summit; otherwise, when the Lapis Lazuli Bamboo Grove disappeared, they may well have dropped down to the bottom of the universe,” says the smiling Sudhana.

Puzzled by all this, Keyura asks:

“Where is the bottom of the universe? And why would we drop there when the Lapis Lazuli Bamboo Grove disappears?”

As Sudhana floats over on the clouds, he explains with much solemnity:

“The bottom of the universe is a place of blinding darkness. And when you fall in there, unless you are very lucky, it will be an eternity before you again see the light of day.” Sudhana adds:

“The Lapis Lazuli Bamboo Grove and the bottom of the universe are completely different. Although they simultaneously exist in the great Chiliocosm, they are not in the same space-time. The Lapis Lazuli



Bamboo Grove is formed of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty; whenever the mind is impure, it disappears; and when it does, the denizens of the darkness at the bottom of the universe take the opportunity to lure others into that place.”

Keyura, the Ranger, and Flame listen attentively as they follow Sudhana out of the forest to a broad green meadow at the crest of the mountain, full of small purple and blue flowers and drenched by a cool dew which moistens the edges of their clothing. Presently, innumerable colored clouds come floating in, covering all the countless lower peaks, which take on the appearance of islands dotting a boundless sea.

Standing on the crest, Sudhana points with his hand and says:

“East is this way. When the weather is clear, this is where the blazing sun rises up from the behind the mountains. This is the highest point on the Boundless Summit; from here you can clearly see all the surrounding peaks. The Boundless Summit is also the repository of life; all you have to do is come here, observe the four directions, quietly reflect, listen to the sound of the universe, and then the secret powers of the universe will manifest, as will your brilliant self-nature.

“Keyura — — Keyura — — ” the Canary calls out. They all look around for the Canary, but all they see is a flock of birds hovering in the vast sea of clouds.

Then the Ranger, champion of the animals, joyfully calls out:

“They’re egrets, a type of aquatic bird that feeds on fish and insects.”

“But what are aquatic birds doing here in the mountains?” asks Keyura.

“Keyura, they’re migrating to a marshy place to the south of the Boundless Summit where there is lots to eat,” explains Sudhana.

However, noticing that they don’t seem to be going anywhere, Keyura can’t help but ask:

“Yes, but why are they hovering in one place? It looks like they are getting tired.”

Stirred by the wind, the clouds take on the appearance of spindrift dancing in the firmament, at times far off in the distance, at times coming close. Seeing that the others are looking rather confused by all this, Sudhana points to the clouds and says:

“It’s not that the egrets aren’t in a hurry to reach their destination; it’s just that they’ve lost their bearings due to the night fog created by the storm last night.

“Do you mean to say that they won’t be able to continue to their destination until the night fog completely disperses?”

“That’s right, Flame,” confirms Sudhana.

Thereupon Keyura urgently asks:

“How long will it take for the night fog to disappear? Sudhana, do you have any way of helping the egrets out of their predicament?”

“Keyura, the night fog can only be dispersed by the powerful rays of the sun,” explains Sudhana, falling silent for a moment before continuing:



“Actually, confusion is innate; it’s a result of past life karma. It’s the same with the flock of egrets hovering in the sky, unable to get their bearings straight due to the night fog.”

“Does that mean that confusion is permanent?” asks the Ranger pensively.

“Those who understand the power of a steadfast aspiration are no longer bound by past karma,” Sudhana says with a smile.

“The power of a steadfast aspiration?” asks Keyura with increasing curiosity.

Engulfed in the thick clouds, the Boundless Summit looks like a maze; lost in the night fog, the snow-white egrets grope about for the way out. Seeing that Keyura, Flame, and the Ranger have also lost their way, Sudhana decides to take them to the Persistent Calyx Garden so that they can better understand the power of a steadfast aspiration.

“There are many marvelous sights on the Boundless Summit. To visit a treasure mountain and return empty handed would be such a shame. Let me take you to the Persistent Calyx Garden!” says Sudhana, extending his hand towards the sky, whereupon a lovely cloud comes floating over. When they all climb on, the cloud carries them away.

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Riding the fluffy cloud, they fly over one mountain after another.

Viewing the breathtaking scenery, Keyura, Flame, and the Ranger wish they could keep it forever. Just as they are lost in the view, Sudhana suddenly steers the cloud down towards a sheer cliff face, filling them with fear; yet, all they can do is hang on and let Sudhana guide the cloud along its circuitous course.

After flying for some time, the air becomes clear and sweet smelling. Thereupon, they notice that the cliff face is draped in row upon row of small green berries, making it look like a stately palace. After passing the towering cliff, they emerge into the resplendent sunlight.

“There’s a meadow up ahead shrouded in a thin, purple haze; it’s splendid!”

“Ranger, that’s the incomparable Persistent Calyx Garden,” says Sudhana with a smile, breaking his long silence.

Flame and Keyura try hard to make out the Persistent Calyx Garden, but all they see is the purple haze.

“Ranger, you can see the Persistent Calyx Garden?”

“Flame, that purple haze may seem quite thin, but it actually has great power and is constantly protecting the Persistent Calyx Garden, which nobody can see without the permission of the Persistent Calyx Boy,” explains Sudhana, waving a colored ribbon, spinning out golden clouds in the shape of a ruyi.

“Persistent Calyx Boy —— ” calls out Sudhana, whereupon the ruyi-shaped cloud floats towards the purple haze, following a dark-blue path in the azure sky down towards the Persistent Calyx Garden. The



only sound is the incessant chatter of the Canary and the Macaque.

Forthwith, they reach the purple haze towering in the sky, whereupon they discover that, just as Sudhana described it, the purple haze indeed gives off a powerful force. Sudhana circles above the purple haze several times before again calling out:

“Persistent Calyx Boy —— ”

Apart from the tumultuous wind disheveling their clothes, there is no sound. Suddenly, from the center of the purple haze comes wave upon wave of rippling light. Just as Keyura and the others become alarmed, “si —— ” a strange sound comes out of the purple haze and a round hole about three feet in diameter appears. Then the powerful purple haze brings Sudhana’s yellow cloud craft to a halt.

“Long time no see, Sudhana!” calls out a youthful voice, just as the force in the air gradually decreases. As the purple haze thins out, they see that they are in a garden full of peculiar plants and meandering streams, and faintly make out a boy of eight or nine waving at them.

“Is he the Persistent Calyx Boy?” asks Flame.

“That’s right. Don’t worry, everybody. We’re about to descend to a realm of fantastic plants,” says Sudhana, smiling and waving towards the Persistent Calyx Boy standing in the clusters of flowers.

Thereupon, huddled close together in Sudhana’s cloud craft, they quickly descend and then leisurely float through a garden full of dew-laden leaves of all shapes and sizes. Engrossed in the natural beauty, the Ranger stretches out his hand and fondles one of the strange

leaves, exclaiming:

“These leaves sure are odd; we must be in some kind of fairyland!”

“Ranger, this isn’t a fairyland; indeed, there are some flowers here which aren’t found in any fairyland.”

Sudhana takes them around for a better look. Observing the surroundings, Keyura anxiously asks:

“How much longer till we reach the Persistent Calyx Garden?”

“Everything in the Persistent Calyx Garden depends on the nourishment provided by this stream. Keyura, if you can see the difference between this limpid stream and those in the world of men, then you will understand the secret of the Persistent Calyx Garden,” says Sudhana while turning around.

“Oh — ” says Keyura, taking a closer look at the stream.

The limpid stream originates from the springs in the hills surrounding the Persistent Calyx Garden. Looking closer, they discover that the stream flows in a circle and that on the surface of the water there are two different mists—one above, extending upwards; and one below, fusing with the water.

“Amazing!”

“Flame, have you noticed the silver particles in the upper mist?”

“Oh! Keyura, I see it,” says Flame with eyes wide open. Then she happily exclaims:

“Those silver particles are dropping into the water; then they follow the stream and silently make their way to the grassland!”



“These remarkable particles seem to have a special purpose!” remarks the Ranger based on his extensive knowledge of natural phenomena. As they enthusiastically put forth various conjectures, the cloud they are standing on suddenly disappears, depositing them in the Persistent Calyx Garden.

“Sudhana, it’s alright; you can go back. Let them enjoy the Persistent Calyx Garden for a while.”

As they are still getting firm on their feet, they see a rosy-cheeked boy draped in a cape woven out of calyces holding in his chubby hand a jade-green blade of grass laden with dew, animatedly speaking with Sudhana.

“Persistent Calyx Boy, the rest is up to you,” says Sudhana, then addresses the others:

“The Persistent Calyx Garden is full of wonders; don’t lose this rare opportunity to find Beauty amidst this natural wonderland,” says Sudhana before flying off.

The Persistent Calyx Garden has every kind of natural landform one could imagine—hills, lakes, marshes—as well as every kind of life form. During a storm, the towering cliffs surrounding the garden act as a protective shield, making it a secret oasis of life. Ever since he could think for himself, the Persistent Calyx Boy has lived in this secluded valley, learning from the natural world; yet he forever retains the form of an innocent young boy.

The Persistent Calyx Boy has always had a penchant for plants. One time he happened upon a swamp where he found a remarkable golden lotus; it was so lovely that it seemed to have been accidentally dropped from heaven. Wishing to observe it grow, day and night he remained in the mosquito-infested swamp, which was also the abode of alligators and poisonous snakes.

After some time, he discovered that this kind of plant actually thrives in mud and stagnant water. Once the first tiny leaf breaks through the surface, the lotus begins to extend its stem until all the leaves reach the surface, and then the entire bud comes forth.

The Persistent Calyx Boy noticed that the petals of the golden lotus are supported by a rather unattractive calyx. Afterwards, when the flower blooms, it too is supported by the calyx; then, after the lovely flower has withered and fallen off, the calyx remains to support the fruit; only when the fruit is mature does the calyx finally fall off.

The Persistent Calyx Boy was quite amazed by this whole process. Afterwards, he began to make a great effort to collect calyx-bearing plants and cultivate them on a large scale. In the process of observing them grow he gradually came to understand that different plants grow in different ways.

Ever since Keyura, Flame, and the Ranger arrived in the Persistent Calyx Garden the Persistent Calyx Boy has been showing them around. Sometimes he takes them in a small paddle boat deep into



the marsh; at other times he leads them barefoot through the dry and cracked loess fields, into the tall grasses, or up to the crags. And wherever they go, no matter how difficult to reach, they always discover some kind of calyx-bearing plants thriving there—all planted by the Persistent Calyx Boy in accordance with the particular topography, temperature, and moisture.

Since arriving in the Persistent Calyx Garden, the words of Sudhana have stayed with Keyura. She is anxious to scour the Persistent Calyx Garden for some clues which might help her find the Harp Boy. Today, as the Persistent Calyx Boy teaches them how to cultivate calyx-bearing plants, she expectantly asks:

“Why is this place called the ‘Persistent Calyx Garden’?”

“Every flower has a calyx, which is rather like a leaf, only thinner. There are many different kinds of calyces; a calyx with separate sepals is called polysepalous, such as that of the rape plant; a calyx with joined sepals is called gamosepalous, such as that of the broad bean plant.

Paying close attention, the Ranger asks, “It seems that calyces always have only one whorl.”

“Single-whorl calyces are most common, but there are also some with a double whorl,” explains the Persistent Calyx Boy.

“Everything in nature has a purpose. But just what is a calyx for?” asks Flame, looking up while observing a flower.

“Good question, Flame. The main function of a calyx is to support the

immature bud before it opens. After the bud opens into a lovely flower, the calyx has fulfilled its purpose and falls off.

“But what’s a persistent calyx?” asks Keyura.

“Keyura, there are some calyces which don’t wither and fall off after the flower blooms; instead, they remain in place to support the immature fruit as it grows; this type of calyx is called a persistent calyx!”

“Oh, I get it,” says Keyura, going on to say:

“All the calyx-bearing plants here have a persistent calyx; that’s why this place is called the Persistent Calyx Garden!”

“But why do you plant only plants with a persistent calyx?”

“Ranger, the persistent calyx faithfully supports the flower; and then it supports the fruit until it reaches maturity. In the same way, all living things are supported by the power of a steadfast aspiration!” explains the Persistent Calyx Boy, pulling off a withered calyx before continuing:

“Without the support of its calyx, it’s very difficult for a flower to fruit; the persistent calyx is like an aspiration or a vow; only by the force of a steadfast aspiration or vow is it possible to bring one’s purpose to fruition!”

“So does that mean that everything in this life is determined by what we have thought in a previous life?” asks Flame, somewhat taken aback.

“Flame, all the plants in the Persistent Calyx Garden are the result



of the steadfast aspiration of nature. With the support of its persistent calyx, the flower is bound to bring forth fruit!”

Shrouded in the purple haze, due to the cultivation of the Persistent Calyx Boy the Persistent Calyx Garden is full of rare flowers and fruits, blooming and withering, budding and maturing, revealing the rhythm of life.

Just as Keyura, Flame, and the Ranger have finally come to appreciate the profound significance of the Persistent Calyx Garden, Sudhana silently appears, as if out of nowhere. Thereupon, they mount his cloud craft and fly up into the sky. The Persistent Calyx Garden instantly disappears into the purple haze, making them all wonder if it wasn’t just a dream.

“Sudhana, is this a dream? Why has the Persistent Calyx Garden suddenly disappeared?” Keyura asks with surprise.

Sudhana smilingly replies, “Keyura, in the Persistent Calyx Garden you learned that when you are determined you are bound to succeed. As long as you hold to your steadfast aspiration, your innate wisdom will surely manifest.”

“Sudhana, does everybody have innate wisdom?” asks the Ranger.

“Off we go to the Night Halt Heaven! When we get there you’ll understand,” replies Sudhana gazing straight ahead.

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Though they are reluctant to leave the Persistent Calyx Garden, Sudhana conveys Keyura, Flame, and the Ranger towards the Night Halt Heaven. After passing over the Boundless Summit they fly straight ahead towards the bright blue sky, extending endlessly into space.

Noticing that the Macaque is feeling rather uneasy about flying on a cloud, the Ranger starts to chat:

“So, where is this Night Halt Heaven?”

“The the Night Halt Heaven is ensconced in a secluded corner of space,” replies Sudhana, before returning his attention up ahead and silently cutting a path through each successive cloud bank.

“The Night Halt Heaven is just beyond that comely sea of clouds!”

Over the sea of clouds blows a cool, relaxing breeze. Mustering up her courage, Flame asks:

“Just what sort of place is this Night Halt Heaven?”

“Flame, the Night Halt Heaven is the place where the sun, the moon, and the five visible planets come to rest.”

“The place where the sun, the moon, and the five visible planets come to rest? What does that mean?” asks the Ranger.

“Every day, the sun, the moon, and the five major planets course through the heavens following their fixed trajectory, thereby providing the heat and light required by all living things. When these heavenly bodies get tired, they stop at the Night Halt Heaven for a rest.” Just as Sudhana is explaining, a large, dense cloud descends in their direction



like a black curtain, as they all try to comfort the frightened Canary and Macaque. Suddenly, Sudhana steers directly for the dark cloud, saying:

“The the Night Halt Heaven is just behind this cloud bank.”

“It looks really dense and full of hidden perils; let’s turn back,” says Keyura apprehensively.

Disregarding Keyura’s words, Sudhana stretches out his hand, feels the cloud, and says:

“As soon as the mind comes to rest and is free of fear, expectation, and illusion, then the way to the Night Halt Heaven opens up.”

Resembling a rushing waterfall, the raindrops in the cloud shower down on all sides. Reassured by Sudhana’s tranquil demeanor, the others calm down, as though entering into a realm of peace. Despite its imposing appearance, the dark cloud is impotent in the face of their serene composure. Sudhana’s cloud craft nudges the dark cloud, whereupon flaming lamps appear scattered throughout its dark interior. Sudhana happily remarks:

“The the Night Halt Heaven is just ahead!”

In a moment the dark cloud is behind and up ahead there appears a sea of lamps shimmering in the dark wind.

Because it’s now night in the Night Halt Heaven, all that can be seen are antique palace lamps elegantly strung together and stretching into every nook and cranny. From a distance they appear to be strings of pearls cutting through the darkness. Surprised, Flame asks:

“Sudhana, is the Night Halt Heaven illuminated by these lamps all year round?”

“Flame, these lamps represent wisdom. Whenever it is time for an annual celebration, they spontaneously appear. So it looks like we’re just in time to imbibe the light of wisdom!”

The unique atmosphere of the Night Halt Heaven gives Keyura an indescribable feeling which reminds her of the Clouded Bamboo Forest, filling her with a deep sense of yearning.

Piloting his cloud craft, Sudhana takes them around the Night Halt Heaven to have a look at the festival lanterns, radiating a brilliance as strong as Keyura’s incessant yearning. Unable to bear up any longer, she asks:

“Sudhana, why have you brought us to the Night Halt Heaven?”

“Keyura, the Harp Boy you are searching for has already fully developed his innate wisdom; he has attained supreme, unsurpassable, perfect enlightenment. Everybody in the Night Halt Heaven is also enlightened, so perhaps you can find him here!”

Taken aback, Keyura bashfully asks:

“How did you find out that I’m looking for the Harp Boy?”

Presently, there arises the clear and melodious sound of a bell, whereupon all of the august and dignified denizens of the Night Halt Heaven appear before them. Sudhana then tells Keyura:

“It’s because you are still bewildered by that night fog of old that you haven’t been able to find the Harp Boy.”



“Ever adoring Keyura, and having already accompanied her so far on her search, the Ranger anxiously asks:

“Sudhana, how then can we find the Harp Boy?”

“If you have a steadfast aspiration, then your innate wisdom will manifest. Once you have true wisdom, finding the Harp Boy won’t be difficult at all!” says Sudhana. He then turns to Keyura and says:

“Keyura, the Harp Boy is not an ordinary person. If you really must find him, then you have to make a persistent aspiration and arouse your innate wisdom. For, without wisdom like that of the Harp Boy, you’ll never find him.”

As they speak, more and more people of extraordinary appearance join the celebration getting underway in the Night Halt Heaven. Looking as though they have understood, full of faith, Keyura and the Ranger begin searching the crowd for the Harp Boy.

The night in the Night Halt Heaven is very, very long. They search everywhere for the Harp Boy, but he is nowhere to be found. Sudhana sees that Keyura is already exhausted, but the time has arrived for them to part ways. Before departing, he again exhorts:

“Keyura, whatever you do, don’t forget that the Harp Boy is endowed with supreme wisdom. Only one who has cleared away the persistent fog and generated persistent wisdom can find him. Remember well everything you have learned on the Boundless Summit! If the conditions are ripe, perhaps we will meet again.” As soon as he finishes speaking, Sudhana flies away. As he does, Keyura and the

others leave the Night Halt Heaven and find themselves on the top of a mountain bathed in brilliant sunlight.



8. *The Drunken Guest*

After leaving the Boundless Summit, Flame has been continually thinking about all that has transpired—what Sudhana has told them, the egrets lost in the persistent fog, the persistent aspiration of all the plants in the Persistent Calyx Garden, the ancient wisdom lamps in the Night Halt Heaven..... After pondering for a long while, she turns towards Keyura and the Ranger—by now her confidants—and sedately expresses her sorrow:

“There once was a strong young man who accidentally ate a piece of fermented fruit and has been intoxicated ever since. I’ve already tried everything in my power to sober him up; yet even my brilliant light spectrum has failed to bring him out of his stupor.” As Flame speaks a deep sadness comes over her.

“Flame, where is that young man now?” asks the Ranger.

“So that he doesn’t come to any harm, I’ve ensconced him in a remote mountain valley.”

Having searched far and wide for the Harp Boy, hearing this remarkable tale, Keyura concernedly asks:

“Flame, don’t be discouraged; there must be a way.”

“I’ve already tried everything I can think of. Now you are my only hope.” Seeing herself in Flame’s expectant, lovelorn eyes, Keyura instantly agrees to help.

Her hope renewed, Flame uses her light spectrum to transport herself and her companions to that remote mountain valley.

From Flame's account, Keyura and the Ranger know that the remote mountain valley where the Drunken Guest is to be found is quite secluded. However, when they arrive there, transported by the power of Flame's incomparably brilliant light spectrum, they are dumbfounded by the extraordinary sight of innumerable birds carrying flaming candles in their beaks. The Canary, however, twitters about as though he's found his long-lost bosom friends. Noticing their surprise, Flame says:

“This place is called ‘Dark Valley,’ because the surrounding mountains are so tall that year round it doesn't get any direct light from either the sun or moon. Some time ago I summoned these birds from the secluded valley where I used to live, hoping that the flaming candles they carry in their beaks might help bring the Drunken Guest back to his senses.

Due to the year-round candle light, glittering vines have grown all over the valley floor and surrounding cliffs, dispelling the cold and gloom from Dark Valley. The rippling waves of light reflected in Flame's feather dress make a splendid sight indeed. Upon arriving in the valley, Flame's luster becomes especially bright, just like when she appeared to Keyura in the form of a flaming phoenix. Presently, Flame takes great pleasure in showing Keyura and the Ranger around Dark Valley.



As the Ranger and Keyura walk about, they notice that each time they step on the vines, they give off a burst of light, and also make their feet spring up. Just as they are taking notice of all this, the call of a bird cuts through the valley's silence. Well acquainted with the ways of animals, the Ranger instantly scans the environs for the source of the sound, while the Canary and the Macaque chatter with excitement.

"The bird call is coming from that closed water lily," says Flame while giving the Macaque a comforting stroke.

"A closed water lily? Where is it?" Keyura and the Ranger ask in unison.

"The closed water lily is at the center of Dark Valley; it's also the place where the Drunken Guest is....." Before Flame can finish her words, a brightly colored phoenix flies over, prompting Flame to swiftly extend her colorful feather dress. In an instant, they see a huge water lily with soft and lovely petals emitting a multi-colored light, surrounded by a dozen pretty phoenixes holding glimmering kindling with their beaks.

"Flame, where is the Drunken Guest?" asks the Ranger.

"Ranger, the Drunken Guest is right there in that flower. To keep him out of harm's way, I let him sleep amongst the stamens," says Flame while displaying her spectrum of light, causing the water lily to slowly open. Suddenly, they see a tall youth with a powerful visage, draped in a long sky-blue robe leaving the right shoulder bared, serenely stretched out on the seed pod surrounded by stamens.

“Wow! What a marvelous greenhouse!” exclaims the Ranger, walking forward for a closer look.

The closed water lily is like a peaceful and cozy little world enveloped in a multitude of colors; its golden stamens are like tassels of fine silk caressing the Drunken Guest. His stately face reminds Keyura of the Harp Boy, eliciting a deep yearning and a stream of tears. Thereupon, the Canary flies over and cuddles up to Keyura, hoping to assuage her grief.

“This is the Drunken Guest Wallowing in the Mire. One day he accidentally ate some fermented fruit and ever since he has been continually intoxicated. He passes the time sleeping here in this closed water lily,” says Flame with eyes full of sadness.

“Flame, for every poison, there is also an antidote; there must be some kind of plant which can bring the Drunken Guest out of his stupor,” says the Ranger, deeply moved by Flame’s broken heart.

“Ranger, I’ve tried everything. I’ve tried famous doctors and I even went so far as to cultivate this splendor of mine, but all to no avail,” says Flame with a sigh.

Suddenly, Keyura recalls the words of the Persistent Calyx Boy:

“All the plants in the Persistent Calyx Garden are the result of the persistent aspiration of nature. With the support of its persistent calyx, the flower overcomes all obstacles and brings forth fruit!.....”

“Flame, whatever it was the Drunken Guest ate, it surely wasn’t any ordinary fruit,” says Keyura, pulling out a small jade-green plant with



distinct veins and giving off a warm light. She goes on:

“This was given to me by the Persistent Calyx Boy; he said that it’s the most precious plant in the Persistent Calyx Garden and that it can counteract any poison. Flame, let’s give it a try!”

As Flame excitedly takes the medicinal herb into her hand, she feels as though a powerful electrical current is passing through her entire body. Then she gingerly moves aside the many overlapping petals of the closed water lily and draws near its golden-yellow stamens, whereupon her radiance intensifies and mingles with the flower’s multicolored radiance to create a most remarkable rainbow. She then delicately peels off one leaf and places it in the mouth of the Drunken Guest.

As Keyura and the Ranger steadily gaze at the Drunken Guest, Flame remains at his side, appearing as if in a state of deep concentration. Suddenly, from out of the blade of grass, still in his mouth, there oozes a glittering globule which follows the veins on the leaf and slowly rolls down and makes its way in between his tightly closed lips. Thereupon, the water lily seems to shudder and an intense light comes forth from its petals; its stamens give off a strong fragrance, and the phoenixes keeping guard on all sides stretch out their wings and begin to fly about. Just as Flame is anxiously wondering if she should take the Drunken Guest out of the flower, he suddenly opens his sleepy eyes, looks confusedly at Flame, stands up, and walks out of the water lily without saying a word.

9. *Water Jade*

With the help of Keyura and the Ranger, Flame has succeeded in bringing the Drunken Guest out of his stupor; however, he has completely lost his memory. No matter what they say or do, they simply can't convince him that he has been asleep for centuries. What's worse, he has no idea who Flame is, making her joy turn to sorrow. Seeing that Flame's complexion has become wan and sallow, for days on end Keyura tries to come up with a way to help. Finally, she excitedly tells Flame:

"I once heard that there is a clear-flowing river and that whoever looks into it will recognize his original face. Let's take the Drunken Guest there; when he looks into the river he's sure to get back his memory."

"So then, where is that river?" the Ranger asks expectantly.

"Actually, I don't know. But it's said that if you are really earnest, then you are sure to find it."

Thereupon, in hopes of helping the Drunken Guest recover his memory, together they set out on a long and arduous journey. Searching everywhere, they find countless rivers, but none of them has the desired effect. Nonetheless, the great vitality of nature they encounter along the way shores up their fortitude.

One day, while following the coastline, they come across a limpid



river and follow it upstream. After some time, they reach a river valley full of huge dragon trees covered with light-yellow flowers which come showering down on their heads each time the wind blows.

The Canary and the Macaque quickly take a liking to the place as they excitedly shuttle about in the foliage. The Drunken Guest is also quite pleased with this place, and everybody feels a bit less weary. By now in good spirits, they spend the morning following the river through the magnificent scenery.

In the afternoon, looking through the dense foliage, they catch a glimpse of a towering precipice fronted by a tall and vigorous waterfall generating a dense mist. As they excitedly continue walking along the rough and uneven river bank towards the waterfall, the sound of the water grows louder, finally drowning out all the other sounds in the forest. Before long, the dense mist draws close and strokes their faces. When they finally reach the bottom of the waterfall and sit down to have a good look, the Canary suddenly calls out:

“A lovely maiden —— A lovely maiden —— ”

Much to their surprise, beneath the waterfall there is a girl with long hair, wearing a long white robe. Dancing with self-abandon, she resembles an undulating silvery dragon. At times looking like a supple willow, at times a nimble fish, swinging her water sleeves in unison with the flow of the wind and falling water, she is the graceful dance. As they silently stand beside the thundering waterfall admiring the lovely spectacle, they suddenly discover that it's the waterfall that is

moving in unison with the girl; she and the waterfall move as one.

As they observe in wonderment this dancing damsel adorned with earrings in the shape of the sun and moon, she concludes her dance, silently approaches, and says in a kindly voice:

“I’m Water Jade. Who are you?”

As if waking from a dream, Keyura comes back to herself and asks:

“Why are you dancing below the waterfall? What a wonderful dance!”

Water Jade smilingly replies:

“It’s called ‘The Dance of the Water Fairy,’

and you are the first to see it. The movements are based on the sound of the falling water. To do it well, you have to deeply feel the latent life energy of the water. I want to revive this dance, so for several years I’ve been staying right here, observing and contemplating day and night. I’ve had to weather numberless storms, but now I’ve finally mastered this dance. Because ‘The Dance of the Water Fairy’ is ultimately a creation of the water itself, to do it properly, you have to become one with the water.” Water Jade’s smooth voice is cool and refreshing.

Remembering her original question, she asks:

“Why have you come to this place?”

“We’re looking for the River of Life. We followed this river and it happened to bring us here to this waterfall,” says Flame.

“Looking for the River of Life?”

Seeing that Water Jade is perplexed, the Ranger tells her why they are



looking for the River of Life:

“The River of Life both exists and doesn’t exist. It can appear in a shaded valley; or it might appear in a grassy meadow,” Water Jade says matter-of-factly.

Knowing that there must be some profound meaning in her words, Keyura asks:

“Okay, but what can we do to make the River of Life appear?”

“Actually, it’s not so difficult. All you have to do is let go of all obstructions and experience the profound meaning of ‘The Dance of the Water Fairy’; then the River of Life will appear and the Drunken Guest will regain his memory.”

In order to help the Drunken Guest recover his memory, Flame, Keyura, and the Ranger spend day after day under the waterfall learning “The Dance of the Water Fairy” from Water Jade. By the time the dragon tree next to the waterfall drops its flowers and tiny fruits appear on its branches, they have finally mastered it.

Knowing that the time is ripe, Water Jade leads them in a performance of “The Dance of the Water Fairy” under the waterfall. Amidst the crashing of the water, they experience a profound sense of peace. Dancing in the mist, Water Jade appears to be the daughter of the water. Forgetting herself, she dances with the water, her black hair and soft white robe gracefully following her elegant movement. Guided by Water Jade, they dance with abandon, eventually forgetting the

waterfall, themselves, and their bodies. All that remains is “The Dance of the Water Fairy.”

Becoming one with the rhythm of the water, they have an intimation of Truth, they experience genuine happiness free of delusion. “Shua —— ”Instantly, the teeming waterfall transforms into a mighty river. In the middle of the river is a mirror with the luster of lapis lazuli, reflecting each of their images. Thereupon, the Drunken Guest finally regains his memory; the spring of life begins to flow into his parched soul, slowly filling him to the brim. In the spotless mirror he sees his true self, and finally recognizes Flame.....

When they set out in search of the River of Life, they all assumed that it flowed horizontally, like other rivers. Only now do they come to realize that the true River of Life flows vertically, through the past, present, and future.



10. Dhanyakara

Seeing Flame so happy to be together with the Drunken Guest now that he has recovered his memory, Keyura begins to pine away for the Harp Boy. Feeling Keyura's sorrow as his own, the Ranger decides to spare no effort to help her find him. Today, seeing Keyura quietly shedding tears, he goes to her and says:

“Keyura, let's return to Fushan! There's a city near Fushan called Dhanyakara with a stupa thirteen stories high commemorating the Buddhas of the past. One time I met there a certain Fushan Youth there; your description of the Harp Boy reminds me of him. If we go there, we just might find him—and some clues as to the whereabouts of the Harp Boy.”

Thereupon, the Ranger leads them on a long and arduous trek to Fushan.

When they finally arrive autumn is in full swing. Flame and the Drunken Guest have never been to Fushan before. Eager to show them the wonderful autumn scenery, the Ranger takes them to drink tea at the stupa.

Also known as the City of Enlightenment, Dhanyakara is situated amidst Fushan's many peaks. Fushan is home to many famous mountains and rivers; nobody knows for sure just how big it is, and no

one person has uncovered all its mysteries. Although the Ranger was born and raised here, and is keen to know everything there is to know about it, even for him, Fushan remains a realm of a thousand faces, ever full of mystery.

One time while in Dhanyakara, the Ranger had the good fortune of meeting the Fushan Youth, whose aspiration is to become the Great Lord of Healing. He's never told anyone else about it before, but now reveals it for Keyura's sake.

In Dhanyakara there is no sumptuous architecture; no flying eaves of lapis lazuli; no carved beams. What it does have is the quiet elegance of pristine natural scenery, such that the mere mention of its name resonates deep in the human spirit.

Urged by Keyura, the Ranger leads them to the magnificent Stupa of the Past Buddhas, standing 13 stories tall and situated on the highest point in the city. All who see it are deeply moved by its striking combination of exquisite carvings and primitive simplicity. Standing at the base and looking towards the pinnacle, one sees layer upon layer of bronze bells hanging from the stupa's flying eaves. Most notable are the images of the past Buddhas carved on the four sides of the base; one focused glance at them is enough to bring them to life in the pilgrim's heart and ignite a yearning to see them again and again. Struck with awe on seeing them, the Drunken Guest exclaims:

“Who are they? And what is that force they exude?”

“They are the Buddhas of the past. A Buddha is a person who has



attained the perfection of virtue and wisdom; that's what makes them so powerful," explains the Ranger, while lighting a fire and preparing some tea, all with much proficiency.

The autumn weather in Dhanyakara is extraordinary. When the moon rises in the east it instantly bathes everything in its bright, silvery light. The Ranger pulls out a bag of green label puer tea to welcome his esteemed friends. Eager to add a little flair, Flame happily chips in some longjing tea; and Water Jade's water blossom tea has a fragrance which extends far and wide. The fragrance of the tea mingling with the mellow sound of the Drunken Guest's bamboo flute adds a touch of elegance to the indomitable simplicity of Dhanyakara.

Ever since arriving in Dhanyakara, Keyura has been thinking about finding the Fushan Youth. The lovely moonlight and alluring fragrance of the tea only serve to increase her plaintive sadness; yet, not wanting to spoil the cheerful mood, she does her best to patiently bear up.....

The bright moon slowly rises up alongside the stupa, intensifying the despondency in Keyura's agitated heart. Eventually the moon reaches the stupa's summit; yet the Fushan Youth is nowhere to be found.

"The Stupa of the Past Buddhas is the repository of the power of countless vows. If you want to tap into that power, all you have to do is stand before the stupa and make a vow with utmost sincerity and purity of mind, and your vow is sure to have an effect. Keyura, let's go over to the stupa and give it a try."

Encouraged by her companions, Keyura takes up her sliver of hope,

and together they approach the stupa. When they reach the foot of the moonlit stupa they are surprised to discover that it has taken on the appearance of glowing lapis lazuli, and that on its curved surface there have appeared innumerable images depicting the significant acts of all the Buddhas.

“Keyura, tonight there is something really different about the stupa; hurry up and make a vow!” says the Ranger, gazing on the extraordinary sight, ever solicitous for Keyura’s welfare.

Slightly startled by the dreamlike phantasmagoria, yet recognizing the rare opportunity, Keyura musters up all her courage, concentrates, piously kneels down, and brings her palms together in front of her chest. The Harp Boy and the Clouded Bamboo Forest fill her heart and mind.

As the others look on together, the moonlight seems to progressively enrich the hues of the stupa. Suddenly, the bells hanging from the eaves begin to give off a euphonious sound and the images of the Buddhas begin to rotate. While everybody is staring in amazement, a silhouette is illuminated by the moonlight. Heart racing with anticipation, Keyura jumps to her feet as the silhouette slowly draws near to the stupa.

“Hi —— So we meet again.”

“It’s Quark!” exclaims the Ranger.

“You’re not the Fushan Youth?” asks the Drunken Guest in a low



voice.

Seeing Keyura's disappointment as she holds the Canary and gazes towards the stupa with teary eyes, Flame and Water Jade go to her side to console her.

"Ranger, seeing that you've returned to Fushan, why haven't you and Keyura come to visit me, your old friend?" says Quark as he approaches, seemingly talking to himself and oblivious to their disappointment.

Ever good with words, Quark soon convinces them to visit the plantation he has been cultivating so intensively.

With his penchant for quantification, Quark's agricultural development project has been continuing full steam ahead, as evidenced by the ever-increasing number of red ribbons to be seen proudly adorning Fushan. The Drunken Guest, Flame, and Water Jade are intrigued by Quark's project, and he's more than happy to show them around, his trusty C-D ROM drive ever hanging on his chest for handy access to all the details. However, the Ranger has an entirely different view of all this.

Noticing Keyura's heavy heart, Quark suddenly hits upon an idea and tells her:

"Keyura, no need to be so heartbroken! Everything happens for a reason. There's nothing this C-D ROM drive can't do; it can even produce a seed-image of whatever it is that's troubling you," says Quark, much pleased with himself, toying with his flashing gadget.

Then he looks at Keyura and says:

“From the seed-image, you can tell whether or not the Fushan Youth is the same as the Harp Boy you constantly yearn for. If they are one and the same, all you need is willpower and perseverance, and you’re sure to find him. If they are not the same person, then at least you can be sure that there’s no use in searching in Fushan, and that you’ll have to search elsewhere.”

“What is a seed-image?” asks the Drunken Guest impetuously.

“A seed-image is a product of the mind. It’s the liking, disliking, and whatever other reaction we have to the things we experience through the six senses—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, and mind. These reactions are like seeds that are stored up in a deep layer of the mind; afterwards, when the conditions are right, they begin to sprout.”

“Well then, how do you produce an image of these seeds?” asks Water Jade in a curious tone.

“All you have to do is quietly concentrate, and my C-D ROM drive will tune into your mind, and then produce a seed-image.”

Though not entirely convinced, encouraged by the others, Keyura decides to give it a try. She sits cross-legged, concentrates her mind, and, lo and behold, the Harp Boy appears in her mind’s eye, whereupon she spontaneously calls out, “Harp Boy ——”

“Ka-ka —— ka ——” goes the C-D ROM drive hanging on Quark’s chest while continuously printing out a series of blurred images. Just as everyone is starting to feel disappointed, the C-D ROM drive



unexpectedly prints out a distinct image. Rather pleased with himself, Quark rouses Keyura out of her reverie and says:

“This is your seed-image. You can use it to get a definitive answer.”

Keyura takes the seed-image in her hands and sees two handsome boys and a pretty girl herding sheep on a slope at dusk, while the setting sun filtered through her gauze sleeves bathes everything in its glow.

“These people, who are they?” asks Keyura.

“Keyura, this picture has been produced based on your thoughts; it’s completely reliable. What you see here may well be a product of an old memory. If you search in accordance with this picture, then you’re sure to find the Harp Boy,” assures Quark.

“Somehow, this picture looks like you!” says the Ranger, standing next to Keyura and looking now at the picture, now at Quark.

Seeing how the C-D ROM drive can produce a seed-image, Water Jade asks Quark to help her understand her past. Quirk is quite eager to help. As soon as Water Jade enters into a concentrated state of mind, the C-D ROM drive produces a picture of a young girl with a fine countenance, prompting Flame to remark:

“Water Jade, such a dignified countenance could only be the product of perfect wisdom and compassion!”

Thereupon, Flame, the Drunken Guest, and the Ranger, now thoroughly convinced, each ask Quark to do the same for them, and Quark happily complies. Seemingly pleased with the faith placed in its ability, the C-D ROM drive speedily prints out seed-images for the

others.

Flame's seed-image is the next to come out, and everyone is surprised to see that it consists of nothing more than a bright light, blindingly intense, yet somehow warm and congenial.

Then it's the Ranger's turn. He enters into a state of deep concentration, but as the C-D ROM drive produces his seed-image it vibrates and rattles with such intensity that Quark worries that it might be broken. When he hastily tears off the printout he's startled to see that the seed-image is merely the fluttering light of wisdom and says to himself:

"How strange! How strange!"

After a long while, the C-D ROM drive finally begins to tune into the thoughts of the Drunken Guest and print out the seed-image.

"Wow! Look at all those stamens!" Keyura exclaims spontaneously upon seeing innumerable blooming flowers.

Just as everyone is gasping in amazement, the C-D ROM drive begins to uncontrollably print out one strange seed-image after another. While Quark frantically tries to find a way to turn it off, the C-D ROM drive starts giving off a flowery scent and prints out the seed-image of the City of One Hundred Flowers floating in the Milky Way with a magnificent youth amidst its beautiful flowers.....

Seeming as if it wants to divulge all the secrets of the universe, Quark's C-D ROM drive continues clacking away and making more printouts.



Just as they are all immersed in figuring out the significance of the City of One Hundred Flowers, Sudhana suddenly appears.

“Keyura, you’ve seen the perennial fog of the Boundless Summit, the perennial calyx, and the Night Halt Heaven, yet you still don’t get it! How, then, are you going to find the Harp Boy?” says Sudhana with a sigh.

Seeing Sudhana, the Canary and the Macaque begin to happily chirp. By contrast, Sudhana’s admonition leaves Keyura feeling at a loss as to how to proceed, and coyly asks:

“Sudhana, Quark’s C-D ROM drive has given us some clues.....”

Without waiting for Keyura to finish, Sudhana says disapprovingly:

“Those images produced by Quark’s C-D ROM drive are nothing but illusions! Keyura, that seed-image won’t help you find the Harp Boy!” Thoroughly dismayed by Sudhana’s words, when nobody is paying attention, Quark makes a stealthy departure.

Ever sincere and solicitous in his efforts to help Keyura, the Ranger modestly asks for advice.

“Sudhana, seeing that Quark’s approach is of no use, how shall we go about finding the Harp Boy?”

Sudhana remains silent for a moment, then says to Flame:

“Flame, you can help Keyura by again displaying your light spectrum.”

Sensing Flame’s puzzlement, Sudhana continues:

“The Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound exists outside of time and

space as we know it. If you go there, you may well find the august Prabhūtaratna again. Then Keyura will understand all causes and conditions.”

“Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound? Sudhana, do you mean to say that there are other worlds in addition to this one?” asks the Drunken Guest.

“Drunken Guest, the cosmos is vast and infinite; in addition to this planet we live on, there are also innumerable other life-bearing planets. However, due to the occluding influence of the perennial fog of past karma, most people are only aware of the world they themselves presently inhabit.

No sooner does Sudhana finish, than Water Jade asks:

“Where is the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound? Are these other worlds the same as this world?”

Sudhana smilingly replies:

“Each world has its own characteristics, and these are determined by the karmic force of the beings who live there. The Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound is unique, and it’s very far away. It’s completely unhindered by the limitations of time and space which apply elsewhere. In the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound, time and space have no meaning whatsoever.”

“Sudhana, seeing that the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound is so far off, how will I be able to carry our entire party there?” wonders Flame.

“Flame, it’s said that a vow is stronger than even a diamond. As long



as you have confidence and make reaching the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound your one and only goal, then your light spectrum will surely be able to transport the entire party to the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound.”

Urged on by the others, Flame enters into a state of concentration and expands out her multi-colored feather dress. In an instant, a dazzling awn of light shoots out in all directions, forming a broad light spectrum. Feeling as though they have been lifted up by the light, they suddenly find themselves in boundless outer space.

As Flame’s light spectrum spins out innumerable gorgeous images of every description, they leave their familiar world and commence their journey to the distant ends of the cosmos. Transported in the light spectrum, they effortlessly arrive at a galaxy trillions of light-years away, where a stream of brilliant stars rhythmically flows from an unseen source towards the infinite future. In utter amazement, they go deeper and deeper into the galaxy, passing through a time tunnel leading beyond time and space, past worlds more numerous than the grains of sand in the Ganges.

As they speed past so many different worlds that they can only catch a fleeting glimpse, a marvelous sound wave accompanied by a faint silvery light wave ripples into Flame’s light spectrum. Still in a deep state of concentration, Flame senses that they are almost at the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound. Careful not to take any chances, she musters all the power of her mind and follows the silvery light wave.

Then her light spectrum enters the sound waves, and they all watch as the distant light wave relentlessly ripples forwards.

In a moment of sudden inspiration, Flame separates her light spectrum from the trajectory of the sound wave and brings them down to the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound.

The Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound exceeds their expectations. There is a sound wave—seemingly generated by the air molecules—which instantly removes all vexations. It sounds like a sparse musical tone which never ceases, making the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound a place of purity and joy. They are immediately enraptured by this beautiful and peaceful place adorned with such wonderful sounds.

“The Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound is named after its sound. All the beings here, both sentient and insentient, are a product of that sound. As for the source of the sound, it’s a product of the purity of mind of the inhabitants; it’s capable of removing any kind of impurity, both visible and invisible.....” As they listen to Sudhana, they gradually come to sense that his voice is somehow melding into the spacious and pure sound of the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound.

Suddenly, in unison with the formless sound waves, there appears wave upon wave of brilliant silvery light, displaying the contents on the Glorious Aeon of the Past. Thereupon, as though transported by the dense sound waves, the consummately august Prabhūtaratna appears right in front of them.



Meeting Prabhūtaratna for the second time, Keyura's apprehension instantly vanishes in its entirety. The Ranger, Drunken Guest, Flame, and Water Jade—they too suddenly realize that the beginningless past is the endless future, and that the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound is nothing other than the future world ———

11. The Omniscient Ocean

Day and night, the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound is permeated by a wonderful, bright sound which has a cleansing effect on the cells of living beings. Ever since arriving in the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound, Keyura and her companions have all felt relaxed and invigorated in body and mind, giving them a taste of spiritual joy.

This world is permeated by a vigorous life energy, such that everything, right down to the tiniest blade of grass, radiates a mysterious purifying energy. Like a chest full of precious gems, this unique world is the source of endless joy and youthful curiosity. Following the marvelous sound wave, they explore the wonderful scenery, the epitome of purity and Truth. Yet, Keyura’s thoughts remain focused on one thing—finding the Harp Boy.

Today, as they stroll amongst the majestic peaks extending endlessly into the distance, they hear the undulating sound of the ocean tide wafting up through the verdant foliage, enveloping them, irresistibly calling out to a place deep in their hearts.

“Wow! The sound of the tide sounds exactly like the call of the Harp Boy!” states Keyura, as her mind wanders through the Clouded Bamboo Forest.

Presently, the stupa at Dhanyakara appears to the mind’s eye of the



Ranger, who senses that he is being protected by the ancient Buddhas it commemorates; Flame overflows with a boundless light; the Drunken Guest feels that in some hidden place there is a precious star-shaped diamond; Water Jade's spirit travels to a milky-white pool covered with a thick mist imbued with vitality.

"The sound of the tide is so peculiar; it must be bearing some profound meaning!" says Water Jade, returning from her reverie.

"I remember hearing Sudhana say that the Omniscient Ocean can be found in the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound and that it's the widest and deepest body of water in the entire universe..... Is it possible that we're now in the vicinity of this eternal ocean of wisdom and happiness?" wonders Flame.

Aroused by Flame's words, they set out in search of the source of that mysterious sound reverberating through the mountains.

"Well then, let's have a look. Perhaps we'll find something," says Keyura, hoping to find some clues as to the whereabouts of the Harp Boy.

Though each has his own expectations as to what they may find, they are united in their intention to find the source of the marvelous sound.

The captivating sound leads them into a tall and luxuriant forest.

"These trees are all very old, yet they are still brimming with life energy. Although they appear to be stretching out in the direction of the sunlight, in fact they are bent towards the sound of the tide," says

the Ranger, leading the others to take a closer look at the forest.

“He’s right!” exclaims Flame while surveying the plants covering the mountains.

“The Omniscient Ocean really does have the power to bring any wholesome aspiration to fruition,” says Keyura, her hopes increasing as she listens ever more closely to the ocean tide. Thereupon, they redouble their efforts to follow the reverberating sound back to its source—the Omniscient Ocean. Sensing Keyura’s uplifted spirit, the Canary shuttles through the lush foliage on his golden-yellow wings in search of the source of that mysterious sound.

As they spend the better part of the day searching, it seems as though the sound is right next to their ears; yet, wherever they look, they are still inside the lush forest.

“Keyura!” Just as they are getting discouraged, the Canary calls out from the distance.

“Why does the Canary sound so startled? Is something wrong?” says Keyura, concerned that her life-long companion might be in trouble. Forgetting everything and breaking into a sweat, she rushes in the direction of the Canary’s call, all the others close on her heels.

After running some distance, the ground becomes rough and bumpy, whereupon Keyura loses her bearings. By now utterly exhausted, she stops to catch her breath and see if she can spot the Canary.

“How is it that I’ve run so far and still can’t see or hear the Canary?” Keyura asks herself tearfully.



“The Canary is smart and quick-witted; he surely isn’t in danger.....”

“Zi — zi — ” Before the Ranger can finish, he is interrupted by the anxious sound of the Macaque, perched up in a tree and pointing to some distant spot.

“The Macaque has found the Canary,” says the Ranger before dashing off in the direction indicated by the Macaque, all the others close behind.

Before long, they spot the Canary far off in the distance flying towards them with all his might. Everyone breathes a sigh of relief, while Keyura shouts out with joy and opens her arms to give the Canary a tight hug.

However, the Canary just chatters incessantly before breaking free of Keyura’s hug and flying upwards. As the Canary frantically hovers overhead, everybody looks at each other in puzzlement. Keyura hurriedly explains, “The Canary is saying that there is a strange place up ahead, with a squirrel in danger. He wants us to hurry up and save it!”

“So, what are we waiting for?” says the Ranger urgently.

Thereupon, the Canary swiftly leads them through the forest and towards the east. Before long, they encounter more and more dead trees, as well as quite a few living ones covered with black spots. In stark contrast to their earlier experience, all the animals seem to be seized by sorrow, leading them to become increasingly apprehensive.

“Keyura,” says the Canary, urgently directing their attention to a

huge, dark cloud shrouding the distant sky. Alarmed by the sight, they spontaneously pick up the pace.

They quickly arrive at a large patch of dead trees giving a window-like view of the dark cloud hovering overhead. Up ahead is an especially dark area with an eerie quality to it.

“The Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound is so utterly pure and overflowing with life energy. How could it contain such a desolate and forlorn place as this?” they wonder in amazement.

Taking a close look around, Keyura spots an exhausted and terrified squirrel just up ahead, clinging to a fallen tree. As the Canary circles around the squirrel, Keyura calls out:

“Look! There’s the squirrel.”

“It’s in trouble; I’ll go help it,” says the Ranger as he rushes forward.

“Wait!” calls out the Drunken Guest. Grasping the Ranger’s arm, he continues:

“Something’s not right about that spot up ahead.” Then he picks up some rocks and throws them forward.

As everyone gasps in amazement, the rocks sink into the ground. Then the Drunken Guest picks up a dead branch about the height of a person, gingerly walks forward a few steps, and sticks it into the dark ground. The branch quickly disappears into the ground as they look on in terror.

“This is really dangerous! A few more steps and we’d be finished,” says Flame stuttering with fear.



“It’s quicksand. It looks like solid ground, but as soon as you step on it, you begin to sink. If there’s nothing to hold on to, you just sink until you finally disappear,” explains the Drunken Guest. Thinking for a moment, he continues, “The strange thing is, quicksand is only found in places that are wet and dark. So how could there be quicksand in such a bright place as the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound?”

“Drunken Guest, what can we do to save that squirrel?” asks the Ranger anxiously.

“This —— won’t be easy!” says the Drunken Guest, as neither he nor any of the others are able to come up with a solution.

Just then, the Canary flies back to Keyura and starts chirping urgently as the others look on anxiously. When the Canary finally falls silent, Keyura explains:

“The Canary learned from the squirrel that this place was once an ancient pine forest with a beautiful pool surrounded by rocks and fed by crystal-clear spring water flowing out of a crevice in the rocks. The pool provided just enough water for all the animals living here.....”

As they listen, the others can’t help but wonder how she could possibly be describing the earlier state of their present location. Then Keyura gasps in a mouthful of air and quickly continues:

“At least that’s how it was up until a few weeks ago, when some mischievous monkeys became curious about the source of the spring, and wondered if they could increase its flow by removing the rocks from the mouth of the spring. But when they removed the rocks, the

water flowing out of the spring turned a deep shade of black, and nothing could be done to make the spring flow clear again. Then the black water began to mix with the soil, turning it into quicksand. Worse yet, a few days ago the quicksand began to emit a black vapor which floated up into the sky and condensed into a black substance that just won't disperse. Since then, each night the black substance has produced a black rain, killing all the trees in a matter of days.

Hearing this story, they wonder how such a calamity could have happened in the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound.

"But how did that squirrel get trapped on that dead tree? Is there any way to save it?" asks the Ranger.

"The Canary says that the squirrel was trying to find a way to stop the flow of the black water. It tried to approach the spring by crossing a fallen tree, but then most of the tree sunk into the quicksand, leaving the squirrel stranded."

"We need to hurry up and figure out what to do. The black substance is quickly expanding, and it looks like it's going to completely wipe out this ancient forest in no time at all. Look, the sun is already setting, and no sunlight is reaching the forest." Hearing Water Jade's words, they realize that time is running out.

As they wonder what to do, the sun seems to drop more quickly.

"There might be a way," says the Drunken Guest.

"What is it?"



“Hurry up, tell us!”

“Whatever it is, we have to try it!”

Seeing that time is running out, they urge the Drunken Guest to quickly present his idea.

“First, we have to disperse the black substance in the sky,” says the Drunken Guest. Turning to Flame, he continues, “Flame, you might be able to use the power of your radiance to dispel the black substance and find the source of the black water; only then will it be possible to stop it.”

Flame unhesitatingly accepts the idea.

As the others look on with hopeful eyes, Flame goes into a concentrated state and brings her light spectrum into action. In a moment she is radiating her brilliant light in all directions, as the others look on with bated breath, now at Flame, now at the black substance suspended in the sky.

After waiting for what seems like an eternity, the black substance begins to separate bit by bit and then thin out. Finally, the tremendous power of Flame’s radiance causes it to completely disintegrate and disappear without a trace. As everyone cheers and leaps with joy, the sunlight reaches the ground.

“Everybody, quiet. Now’s our chance. We can use the light of the sun and Flame’s radiance to search for the source of the black water; but we have to hurry up and find it before Flame’s radiant energy is used up,” says the Drunken Guest in a loud, stern voice.

Remembering the urgency of the situation, they immediately set about searching high and low, as the Canary makes countless sorties over the quicksand. Yet, for all their effort, they can't find the source; and to make matters worse, Flame's radiance is starting to fade.

"Hey! I found it, I found it!" Water Jade calls out.

As everyone leaps with joy, the light begins to fade. Thereupon, Keyura turns around and sees that Flame is so overcome by exhaustion that she is shuddering and her complexion is wan and sallow. The Drunken Guest hurries over and helps her sit down, while the others look on in a combination of admiration and concern.

"Now it's time for Water Jade's part," says the Drunken Guest as soon as he has finished helping Flame into a comfortable position. Without wasting a moment, he turns to Water Jade and says:

"Can you use your mastery of the water element to remove the black water from underground and send it into the sky?"

"What?" says Water Jade rather incredulously, before replying:

"Well, I can try, but even if it works, I won't be able to get rid of that miasma in the water!"

"In that case, what can be done?" asks Keyura anxiously.

"Our only hope is that a strong wind will come and blow the miasma into outer space, but....." says Water Jade while extending her hand upwards to take a reading before continuing:

"But at the moment, there isn't any wind at all!"

Hearing Water Jade's appraisal of the situation, the others wrack their



brains for a solution, but all to no avail. Suddenly, the Ranger thinks of the stupa in Dhanyakara and recalls something the Fushan Youth once told him:

“This stupa is empowered with the inconceivable compassion of the past Buddhas. No matter when or where, if ever you find yourself in a predicament, all you have to do is think of that stupa and make a supplication with utmost sincerity, concentration, and purity of mind, and your problem will be solved.....”

“Maybe I can help,” says the Ranger unexpectedly. At first the others are skeptical, but after hearing the Ranger out, they see that there may be some hope.

Thereupon, Water Jade and the Ranger compose their thoughts and enter into a state of concentration, in preparation for an unprecedented cooperative undertaking which allows for not even the slightest mistake.

Water Jade has never before danced without the accompaniment of water, so she has to completely rely on her own strength to draw out the black water.

Indeed, the Ranger has never before supplicated a stupa before, and is therefore concerned that if he makes even the slightest mistake, then all their efforts to save this ancient forest will come to naught. As a result, he feels as though he is standing on the edge of a bottomless abyss.

Ever so slowly, Water Jade transforms her meditative enstasis into

the flow of water, gradually becoming a kaleidoscope of movement, with unlimited affection and stamina. At times, she is a deep pool of pure water; at times, a soaring waterfall, a surging stream, a trickling brook..... Before long, the black water emerges from the quicksand and flies up into the sky, as if summoned by some great unseen force!

Keyura looks on in utter amazement as gust upon gust of wind comes howling in, in response to the Ranger's utmost sincerity and concentration in beseeching the Stupa of the Past Buddhas. And although the wind is strong, it has a pacifying quality to it. As the black water flies up into the sky, the miasma contained therein is blown off by this mystical wind conjured up by the force of a vow.

In this way, through the joint effort of the Ranger and Water Jade, the black water is slowly removed from the quicksand, which finally becomes solid ground again. Even more amazing is that, once the miasma is removed from the sky-borne water, it forms into an auspicious cloud getting ready to send down its precious drops and rejuvenate the land.

Their task accomplished, Water Jade and the Ranger, utterly exhausted, collapse to the ground. Keyura and the Drunken Guest hurriedly help them into the cavity of the tree where Flame is already resting. Then they immediately set about moving a large number of rocks and, directed by the squirrel, place them over the mouth of the spring. Only when they look up and see the bright moon hanging in the sky do they realize how much time has passed and how exhausted they are from



moving so many rocks.

Just as the auspicious cloud drifts in front of the bright moon, Keyura and the Drunken Guest, supporting each other, go over to the tree cavity where the others are resting. As they are telling them all that has happened, the cloud begins to shower down a drenching rain, scouring clean everything on the ground. Listening to the soothing sound of the rain, they all drift off to sleep and have the same dream.

In the dream, they hear the melodious tune of the Harp Boy coming from far, far away, slowly entering Keyura's heart.

"Huh? The song of the Harp Boy; it sounds just like the sound of the tide....."

"Keyura — Keyura — "

Aroused from their dream by the call of the Canary, they look out from the cavity and see that the ground is illuminated by the golden rays of the sun filtered through the foliage. Having passed the night in a deep slumber, summoned by the lovely scenery, they jump up and come rushing out of the cavity.....

"Wow! I've never seen such a beautiful forest," exclaims Flame, as they look out on the lush pine forest which the day before had been little more than a patch of withered and dying trees.

In this most wonderful of ancient forests there are innumerable dark green pine trees, some standing steady and erect on the flat areas, others jutting out from seams in the rocky crags, still others clinging

to the tops of boulders. Their towering green tops reach for the sun, giving the ashen trunks an air of pride.

“Fantastic! Overnight the withered trees have completely come back to life. The Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound really is a remarkable place!” says Keyura surveying the surroundings with deep admiration.

“Look! The Canary and the Macaque have found something amongst the rocks. Let’s go have a look,” the Drunken Guest says excitedly.

Taking a closer look, they discover a pellucid spring flowing from amongst the rocks, just as the squirrel had described it, the rocks having already been washed sparkling clean by the flowing water. When they spontaneously use their hands to scoop up the water and have a drink, a cool and refreshing feeling permeates them from head to toe.

“Listen! It’s the sound of the Omniscient Ocean,” whispers Flame.

“The sound is so distinct, the Omniscient Ocean must be nearby, but in which direction?” says Keyura somewhat anxiously.

“Look, all the tops of the pine trees are inclined in the same direction, as if pointing the way to something. Let’s try going in that direction; perhaps we’ll find the Omniscient Ocean,” says the Ranger as he surveys the environs.

After proceeding for some time in the direction pointed out by the pines, they emerge from the forest and are dumbstruck by the vast expanse of blue water filling their entire field of vision, as the boundless firmament seems to enter their hearts.



“The Omniscient Ocean really is the ocean of the perfection of wisdom!”

“Look! There are transparent rays of light shooting up from the center of the ocean,” says Keyura, pointing off into the distance.

“Oh? What is that?” shouts the Drunken Guest, pointing towards a white patch in the firmament.

Off to one side, the Canary and the Macaque chatter away as the white patch swiftly approaches.

“Wow! A huge white crane!”

The snow-white crane skims right over their heads and then towards the pine forest before turning around and coming back towards them.

“Look! It has a dark green pine branch in its beak,” exclaims Water Jade.

Suddenly, the Canary flies up to greet the white crane. Much to the amazement of those looking up from the ground, the two birds circle about in the sky, one yellow, the other white; one small, the other large. After a short while, the white crane unexpectedly flies towards the onlookers, releases the pine branch, lets out several loud calls, and gradually disappears over the distant ocean.

Thereupon the Canary calls out and spins around above the capering Macaque, who has picked up the pine branch and is getting ready to kick it into the ocean. Seeing that the Macaque has no appreciation of its great value, Keyura runs up to stop him. Yet, she is too late; the nimble Macaque sends the pine branch into the sea with one swift

kick. Just as the others are lamenting the loss, something odd happens. As soon as the pine branch hits the blue water it magically transforms into a skiff made of fragrant pine flowers lashed together, ready for use.

Witnessing such an extraordinary series of events in quick succession, they can't help but wonder if it's all just a dream.

"I remember Sudhana saying that in the Omniscient Ocean there is a city called Prabhūtaratna. The way the white crane flew over like that was so odd, and now there is this skiff; it seems that there is some special purpose in all this. Let's get in the pine-flower skiff; perhaps it will take us to the City of Prabhūtaratna." Thoroughly inspired by Flame's words, they clamor onto the skiff, raise the sail, and set out in search of their sapphire dream.

As they sail across the pellucid waters of the Omniscient Ocean, their extraordinary pine-flower skiff doesn't make even the slightest wake. Laden with the sound of the upsurge, the ocean wind has a way of purifying all defilements. The wind blowing through her long hair, Keyura thinks of the Harp Boy and enters a cloud of yearning, ever hopeful of finding him.



12. The Ancient Ginkgo Tree

When there are no waves, the Omniscient Ocean looks like a huge, glittering sapphire, extending as far as the eye can see. Its blue waters are so transparent that from the surface all the many creatures living in its depths are clearly visible: the brightly colored tropical fish frolicking amidst the coral; the graceful water plants, some sparse, some dense, forming an elegant underwater garden; innumerable fish of all shapes and sizes sauntering about..... Lost in delight, Keyura and her companions look down at the marvelous spectacle, appearing as though within hand's reach.

Thus sailing along, thoroughly entranced by the extraordinary sights, they forget all about the City of Prabhūtaratna. On and on they go, how long and how far, nobody can say for sure. Eventually, Keyura spots an old citadel silently rising up out of the water.

“Ding dong — ding dong —” The clear and melodious sound of a jeweled bell seizes their attention.

“The City of Prabhūtaratna; at last we’ve found it!” Flame calls out, unable to hold back her excitement.

As they look on in joyous expectation, the pine-flower skiff soon brings them right up to the lovely citadel.

Everything in the City of Prabhūtaratna has an indescribable sense of

holiness and purity about it; even the ground is as pure as jade. The tall, graceful trees are a vivid green, and give off various hues and radiate rays of purple, light yellow, and deep red, interweaving into a harmonious kingdom of pure light.

“How wonderful, this City of Prabhūtaratna! All these colors seem to illuminate my very spirit. Though I’ve mastered the secret art of the light body, I’ve never before experienced such a beautiful feeling as this!” proclaims Flame, happily imbibing the splendid hues.

“Indeed, everything is so pure, so full of life!” exclaims the Ranger, greatly intrigued by the mysterious life energy filling the air.

“The City of Prabhūtaratna is so beautiful, so real!” says Keyura, ever keen to appreciate Beauty.

As they look around, engrossed in the scenery, suddenly Keyura faintly hears the song of the Harp Boy.

“Listen! It’s the Harp Boy; he must be nearby.”

Mingling with the wind like a light rain, the song of the Harp Boy moistens the heart.

Hearing the mesmerizing song of the Harp Boy for the first time, Flame, Water Jade, and the Drunken Guest finally understand why, after one brief encounter, Keyura can’t forget about the Harp Boy. Now eager to see the Harp Boy for themselves, they begin searching everywhere.

Keyura follows the Harp Boy’s music through the fields thick with chrysanthemums, before climbing up to a mountain lake in a cove



surrounded by stalagmites and filled with blooming water lilies of light yellow. Alongside of the lake are several old trees with new shoots and gnarled roots.

“The Harp Boy’s music is coming from this lake, but why can’t I see him?” says Keyura as she anxiously looks about.

“Keyura, don’t give up.”

Encouraged by the Ranger and the others, Keyura continues searching high and low. Though the cove is not large, she finds not even a trace of the Harp Boy.

By now thoroughly tired, they all draw near the lake and let its lucid waters delight their senses. Suddenly, a frog comes out of a rocky crevice and jumps into the lake, making a big splash. Observing the ripples, Water Jade sees the inverted image of a bright-green tree branch reflected in the water. Strangely, the reflection seems to be gently swaying in time with the music. Water Jade is highly surprised and tells the others what she has discovered. Their curiosity piqued, they trace the source of the reflection through a narrow defile through which they see a towering, luxuriant tree with an odd hole in its trunk a few feet off the ground, large enough to hold a person.

“Is this some sort of sacred tree?” wonders Water Jade.

They approach the tree and are much surprised to discover that the Harp Boy’s lovely music is actually coming from the trunk of this huge tree.

Taking a close look at the tree’s densely spaced leaves, the Ranger

exclaims:

“It’s a ginkgo tree!”

For quite some time, they inspect the tree all over, yet they don’t find anything apart from the mesmerizing music and the occasional fan-shaped leaf blown down by the wind.

As the song of the Harp Boy continuously calls out from the ginkgo tree, Keyura leans on its massive, mottled trunk, listening with teary eyes, expectantly waiting for the Harp Boy to appear.

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By now quite at a loss as to the source of the sound, they sit down dejectedly. That is, except for the Macaque, who, chattering all the while, scampers around the base of the tree. Suddenly, he scurries into the hole, whereupon the music comes to a stop. The Ranger worriedly calls into the hole:

“Macaque —— Macaque —— ”

Not receiving the slightest reply, the Ranger rushes into the hole. The others, though apprehensive, quickly follow suit.

“Wow — — There’s a marvelous hidden world inside the ginkgo tree!”

Passing through the narrow hole and pushing away the many layers of cobwebs, they discover a hidden realm of purity and charm—babbling brooks glimmering with a golden light; ripples like water sleeves,



tenderly caressing the rocks hugging the banks.

“How could there be such a large and beautiful place inside a ginkgo tree?”

“We must be in some other place!”

Discussing back and forth, they follow a winding path along a stream strewn with fallen flowers and pass by young willow trees laden with dew. They suddenly come across a green pond with crystalline water, looking leisurely yet lively under the blue sky and white clouds. Having disappeared some time earlier, the wonderful song of the Harp Boy now becomes audible again, giving Keyura another ray of hope. Following the sound, before long they see a natural stone bridge covered with moss. Nearby, throngs of purple flowers silently sway while hanging in the shade of the willow trees. Water Jade and Flame lithely step onto the bridge.

“Look! It’s the Macaque!”

“This Macaque is really something; he’s so fond of eating and playing that he’s forgotten all about us,” says the Ranger, happy to see that the Macaque is safe.

Through the curtain-like willow branches they see the Macaque sitting in a peach tree laden with fruit, happily feasting on the tender, pink peaches. Just as she’s about to call out to the Macaque, Flame spots a cute boy with his hair tied in two upright pig tails, collecting green fruits and waving to the Macaque.

“That’s Padmaprabha of the Lapis Lazuli Bamboo Grove!” calls out

Flame, excitedly pointing to the chubby boy.

Just then, a small boat hung with crystal-like, transparent flowers comes floating over the water rippling with golden waves, as the catkins blow in the wind.

“It’s Prabhūtaratna and Purple Robe!” Flame shouts as the lovely boat draws close.

“Welcome to the City of Prabhūtaratna, the Peak Condition, the most excellent, splendid, and sacred realm in the entire universe. It’s accessible only to those who have a good amount of wisdom, insight, virtue, and faith,” says Prabhūtaratna with his clear and gentle voice, “and this is the very first time you’ve come for a visit.”

As the boat lightly hugs the edge of the pond, Padmaprabha leaps out, approaches, and says, “That’s right! We get very few visitors here; please join us for a ride in the boat!”

Looking at the crystal-flower boat, they can hardly believe their eyes, or their luck. Reassured by the brightness and sincerity of the expression in the eyes of their three hosts, Keyura lightly jumps into the boat, and the others quickly follow.

With everyone on board, Prabhūtaratna steers the boat upstream through a fragrant lotus patch and to a pavilion next to the water and surrounded by inclining red maples and tender green plantain trees.

Seeing Prabhūtaratna’s majestic appearance for the very first time, they are all dumbstruck. For their part, Prabhūtaratna, Purple Robe,



and Padmaprabha entertain their guests from afar as if they were old friends. Padmaprabha is especially overjoyed, and brews up some fragrant tea in spring water, telling them:

“This is snow-bud tea; it’s picked only once in a thousand years!”

Padmaprabha pours the tea, infusing it with moonlight, as it were. Drinking it, they immediately feel invigorated and thoroughly relaxed. Still hearing the faint sound of the Harp Boy, filled with hope, Keyura, musters up all her courage and says:

“Who is playing that harp?”

“The harp music comes from the ancient ginkgo tree. Nobody makes it; it’s the sound of nature,” replies Prabhūtaratna with a smile.

“It’s not the Harp Boy?” says Keyura to herself, her hope dashed, shivering as if tumbling into a pit of ice.

“At the same time the universe was being formed, this ginkgo tree was also produced between heaven and earth. Although innumerable transformations have taken place in heaven and earth, the resolute ginkgo tree has stood firm, embracing heaven and earth, accompanying sentient beings through eternity,” says Purple Robe while sipping his tea. He continues:

“That tree you entered was the first ginkgo tree to appear, so it’s as old as the universe itself. The wood of the ginkgo tree can be made into a harp which produces the sound of the galaxy; it’s the most harmonious sound in the entire universe.”

“The Harp Boy and the Ginkgo Tree are interdependent. Whenever

the Ginkgo Tree is nearing the end of its life span it generates a Harp Boy. Afterwards, the ubiquitous song of the Harp Boy miraculously brings the Ginkgo Tree back to life,” says Prabhūtaratna.

While Prabhūtaratna and Purple Robe are explaining and the sound of the Harp Boy is reverberating in the visitors’ hearts, the towering ginkgo tree, swaying in rhythm with the music, happily returns to life. Suddenly a fragrant wind blows by —

“Brother, quickly bring them to taste some rare delicacies.”

Thereupon, following the fragrance, Prabhūtaratna and Purple Robe lead the visitors through a cloister bounded by lotus flowers, and then to a pavilion next to a cliff. To their surprise, in the center of the pavilion is a large stone table set out with a wide range of savory dishes. Ever fond of food, the Macaque excitedly bounds to the fore, chattering endlessly.

“Here we have fragrant doufu, ginkgo tree fungus, water celery, stir-fried bamboo shoots, lily bulbs with wolfberries, toon sprouts, and bamboo fungus with lotus seeds.....” enthusiastically explains Padmaprabha.

With lotus leaves as plates, the heavenly flavors are subtle, yet indescribably delicious.

“Padmaprabha, you are a masterful chef!”

“No, no. All these dishes were sent here from the distant Realm of Fragrance,” explains Padmaprabha, waving his chubby hand.

“The Realm of Fragrance?”



“That’s the realm presided over by the Fragrant Buddha. The food there is incomparably delicious, and its aroma can be perceived over a great distance. There’s nothing like it in the world of men. One bowl is enough to satisfy innumerable sentient beings.....”

Hearing Purple Robe talking about the Realm of Fragrance, the wind quietly skims over the dew-laden lotus leaves and draws near, so as to hear more clearly, and partake in their imaginal journey to the Realm of Fragrance ——

13. The City of One Hundred Flowers

Having learned of the interdependence of the Ginkgo Tree and the Harp Boy, Keyura has finally come to realize that finding the Harp Boy requires first recognizing the real nature of the universe. She feels as though she has known Prabhūtaratna in innumerable past lives; yet, she can't bring herself to tell him about her childhood chance encounter with the Harp Boy in the Clouded Bamboo Grove.

“In the heart is a brilliant jewel, a sleeping Buddha.”

After slowly reciting the verse, Prabhūtaratna turns to Keyura and says:

“Everything comes about for a reason. As with the relationship between the Ginkgo Tree and the Harp Boy, everything comes about through the coming together of innumerable causes and conditions. The Harp Boy is a person of incomparably pure radiance; he can only be found by someone who has attained a very high level of wisdom, radiance, virtue, faith, and insight into Truth. In the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound there are hidden many of the secrets of life. If you make a thorough search, perhaps you will come to understand your mission in life; the causes and conditions of the past, present, and future; your self-nature; and the Peak Condition in all its purity, brilliance, and sacredness!”



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As Keyura and her companions relish the unsurpassable purifying radiance of the City of Prabhūtaratna, the words of Prabhūtaratna continually reverberate in their hearts: seek the Peak Condition in your self-nature!

Today, Prabhūtaratna takes Keyura and the others to a secret chamber chiseled out of a giant amethyst without the slightest trace of impurity; under the rays of the sun it gives off a purple glow.

As they marvel at the sight, Prabhūtaratna leads them inside and then to an extraordinarily bright wall mirror. Looking into the mirror, instead of seeing their own reflections, they see a remote valley devoid of people.

“Wow! That’s the dreamland of the Drunken Guest — — Dark Valley,” exclaims Flame.

Just as Flame is speaking, Dark Valley begins to quake. In a moment, mountains collapse and rocks split apart, sending huge waves of detritus tumbling down; deep chasms split the ground; cliffs rise up where earlier there were none; huge trees lose their footing and topple to the ground with a thundering crash, sending plumes of dust into the sky. Countless birds and beasts with no place to hide make frightful cries as they scurry about in terror; some are struck by the flying debris; others fall into the chasms; yet others are crushed by the falling timber..... Then Keyura spots in the middle of the chaos the

flaming phoenixes so dear to Flame, calling out towards the east as they struggle to fly up through the raining debris and into the safety of the firmament. Then everything falls silent.

As they look on in terror and bewilderment at scene after scene of utter devastation, they don't utter a word.

"What is this?" the Drunken Guest finally asks Prabhūtaratna.

"What we just saw in the mirror, is it real? Or is it just some kind of illusion?" asks Flame with astonishment, brought back to her senses by the Drunken Guest's words.

By now they have all returned to their senses, and together turn towards Prabhūtaratna in hopes that he will dispel their misgivings. Sensing their expectation, he comforts them somewhat with his clear and gentle expression, then says:

"This mirror can display anything in the entire universe. All that you saw just now really happened. There was indeed a big earthquake in Dark Valley; it's over for now, but soon there will be another one. In fact, each successive earthquake will be stronger than the previous one, until Dark Valley is totally obliterated."

"Well, is there anything we can do about it?" asks Flame, unable to hold back her tears as she anxiously thinks of the birds and beasts she loves so dearly.

"Prabhūtaratna, is there any way to save Dark Valley?" asks the Drunken Guest urgently, as if beseeching a savior.

"There is. The only way to prevent the coming earthquakes is to find



the earth-seed of wisdom and bury it in Dark Valley.”

“But where is this earth-seed? And what is it?” asks Flame urgently.

“It can be found in the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound. In the bright sea of stars known as the ‘Milky Way’ there is a place called the ‘City of One Hundred Flowers,’ a place full of flowers in every color imaginable. The earth-seed is buried there, hidden in the ground where the original seed of the one hundred flowers grew,” says Prabhūtaratna. Seeing their amazement, he smiles and continues:

“The earth-seed has the appearance of a diamond, the hardest object in the universe.”

“Wow!” Hearing this description reminds the Drunken Guest of the image which appeared in his mind’s eye while listening to the sound of the ocean.

After considering for a moment, Prabhūtaratna turns to the Drunken Guest and says, “There’s no time to waste. Quickly set off for the City of One Hundred Flowers and find the earth-seed; it’s the only thing which can save the Drunken Guest’s Dark Valley.”

After saying farewell to Prabhūtaratna, Purple Robe, and Padmaprabha, Keyura and her companions anxiously set out for the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound.

Traveling under the moon and stars, marveling as they pass by innumerable wonderful sights, they finally spot the endless Milky Way. As if aware of their mission, the stars form into a translucent

carpet, seemingly inviting them to step onto it. As soon as they get on, countless other stars come flying over and cluster round their guests, and then fall away towards the boundless homeland of the stars.

Innumerable shooting stars draw near to see what all the excitement is about, sending brilliant waves through the Milky Way, which can't hold back the urge to dance along.

“Such beautiful shooting stars, rich in the marvels of the universe!” says the brightly shining Flame, noticing that her remarkable light spectrum pales in comparison to these shooting stars.

Keyura stretches out her slender, lily-white arm to scoop up the bright-colored starlight; Water Jade watches in amazement the dance of the Milky Way; for their part, the Ranger and the Drunken Guest remain vigilant and alert. Passing by the bevy of shooting stars, they notice that the number of stars is increasing, but their brightness is diminishing.

“The stars have all fallen silent!” says the Drunken Guest, looking on in wonderment at the cool-shining stars which seem to be guarding some secret.

Presently, the translucent carpet of stars straightens out like a well-behaved child and directly enters into the middle of the sea of stars.

Millions of years ago, here in the center of the Milky way, layer upon layer of innumerable stars guarded a wonderful secret rarely known to men.



Deftly gliding through the dense cluster of stars, their star carpet leaves a slipstream which shakes the densely spaced stars giving off a cool light. Suddenly, the stars begin to emit a light so blindingly bright that they have to close their eyes.

As though perceiving that the passengers on the star carpet harbor no ill intentions, the stars begin to tone down their intense brightness.

“Look; I think we’re now in the homeland of the stars!”

Their apprehension dispelled by Flame’s reassuring voice, one by one they open their eyes, whereupon they are taken aback by the sight of the silvery waves of cool starlight. Then the City of One Hundred Flowers appears in front of them, like a pure land gracefully rising up in the middle of the sea of stars.

Observing the lovely City of One Hundred Flowers from the distance, Keyura recalls the Valley of Flowers where she grew up. The quick-witted Canary flaps its wings and sings a song from the Valley of Flowers with a voice so smooth that it propels the star carpet ever more swiftly through space.

Sitting on the star carpet, they feel a powerful force shooting forth from the tide-like clusters of stars.

“This is the pulse of the universe.”

“Due to her fine attunement to the life force she acquired in mastering the ‘Dance of the Water Fairy,’ Water Jade has a deep affinity with this star cluster,” says the Ranger, just as the star carpet effortlessly glides into the City of One Hundred Flowers, as if steered by an

accomplished surfer.

The City of One Hundred Flowers is like a graceful woman, beaming like jade, pure as ice, unsullied by dust. On her snow-white lapel are embroidered clusters of snowflakes, some of which, unable to resist the enthusiastic invitation of the starlight, slowly drop from the towering lapel, forming into a silk-like icefall with a ringing voice. Crystal-like springs are everywhere, nurturing every kind of flower in a riotous profusion of color, as silky flowers give off streams of starlight. Arriving at the City of One Hundred Flowers, all worldly concerns are left behind.

At a loss as to what to do, they nervously proceed. Much to their surprise, they come across a place totally devoid of vegetation. Yet the Drunken Guest has a strong feeling that there is something alive, but hidden in the ground. Suddenly, the stars silently burst open and drop particles of various colors down to the ground, whereupon they work their way below the surface and ensconce themselves in the soft, warm, moist soil.

“These particles falling from the stars are just like seeds. Might these be the original seeds of the one hundred flowers?” asks the Drunken Guest as he digs up and examines the particles.

“Every life form in the universe has a source, including the flowers of the City of One Hundred Flowers; they couldn’t have appeared out of thin air. Let’s remain here for some time, so that we can find out if



these particles sprout. We just might discover something,” says Keyura expectantly.

After the particles entered the ground, the springs began to flow more rapidly, their sound combining to form a delightful symphony. Before long, the particles begin to sprout and give off starlight; as they absorb the moisture and nutriments in the ground they slowly grow into plants glowing with health and radiating vitality. After a few days, they begin to form buds. Deeply impressed with this remarkable series of events, the Drunken Guest becomes utterly absorbed in observing the plants.

“Come quick! The flowers are about to bloom!”

As Keyura’s voice emerges from the cluster of foliage, the first bud opens and reveals its wonderful charm. Thereupon, with the springs looking on, the countless millions of buds burst forth in droves—brilliant reds, bright whites, light yellows, deep blues—a gorgeous spectacle, more than the eyes can take in. Feeling as though she’s dreaming, Keyura hears the murmuring of the flowers and sees the pulsating of their life force.

It’s the epitome of life itself. Then the sea of flowers, luxuriant and well spaced, gradually begins to fade. The flowers make way for fruits of every description, then silently wither and drop, mixing with the soil to nourish the fruit.

Day after day the fruit ripens. This is the superb charm of the City of One Hundred Flowers, where maturity marks a new beginning.

“Come back! Come back!” In the pleasant cool wind, the Drunken

Guest hears a soft voice continuously calling out. He asks the others to help him determine its source, but, no matter how closely they listen, they simply don't hear it. Though baffled, he is sure that this voice contains a profound secret; thus he settles his thoughts and sets out to find its source.

“The stars are flickering intensely!” exclaims Water Jade, whereupon innumerable stars emit a dazzling array of color, as if they were blooming flowers. Simultaneously, innumerable ripened fruits burst apart in unison, some falling to the ground, others carried away by the wind.

“Come back! Come back!” This time Keyura distinctly hears the sound.

“Wow! The voice is coming from the ground!” announces the Drunken Guest, greatly pleased to have finally found the source of the sound.

Having witnessed the growth and dissolution of the flowers, the Drunken Guest suddenly realizes that this is what is meant by the principle of non-conservation, a serendipitous discovery indeed! Finally clear about the nature of cause and effect, he feels that everything in the universe is revealing its true form. Now he clearly sees that the earth-seeds are buried in the ground with the original seed of the one hundred flowers.

Thereupon, the Drunken Guest takes the earth-seed and returns to the



City of Prabhūtaratna, where Prabhūtaratna helps him bury it in Dark Valley so as to avert the huge earthquake.

14. The Palace of the Moon and the Sea of Milk

Just how big is the universe? Does there exist a space-time beyond space-time? No one can say. Situated in a bright, spotless corner of the cosmos, the City of Prabhūtaratna offers exceptional views of all the workings of the universe. Ever since finding the earth-seed, Keyura and her companions have been endlessly dreaming about the future. In the dream, while they are diligently searching, without being noticed, the universe portrays its secrets in a lovely picture, leaving it behind as an eternal memory of Truth for its guests!

The Macaque finds nothing more delightful than going around with Padmaprabha in search of incomparably delectable fruits.

Today they are looking for apples and Padmaprabha has the urge to go to the spring for a drink. However, since the spring is located in the Source of Purity, no outsiders are allowed to go there without first obtaining permission from Prabhūtaratna. Thus he tells the Macaque to wait for him while he goes to fetch the water.

Unable to quietly wait for Padmaprabha to return with some water, the impish Macaque begins to caper about and inadvertently wanders into the Secret Chamber made of amethyst. There he sees in the wall mirror a long river flowing straight down from the sky and into the earth. As he is observing the scene, brilliant rays of light flash out from the



middle of the river. Spellbound, after closely examining the scene for some time he finally discovers the source of the light—a shiny pearl. The image is so life-like and vivid that the Macaque, unaware that he is looking at a mirror, reaches out to grab the pearl. However, as soon as he touches the mirror the pearl loses its luster and disappears into the river. Stranger still, the river becomes horizontal and turns into a raging flood.

Just as the Macaque becomes panic stricken, Prabhūtaratna leads Keyura and the others into the Secret Chamber. As it turns out, when the pearl disappeared into the river Prabhūtaratna sensed that something was amiss, and has hurried over with the others to find out what's happened.

All that can be seen in the mirror is a great flood wreaking havoc all over, pummeling the land, undermining the mountains. As the forests are washed away, the animals can be seen bobbing up and down in the turbid water, struggling to find a foothold, relentlessly pursued by the boulders and trees pushed along by the torrent, their shrieks of terror occasionally heard over the roar of the flood waters.

“Hurry up and save them before they drown!” Keyura calls out, unable to bear the terrible sight.

“What is the reason for such a devastating flood?” asks Water Jade urgently. Prabhūtaratna replies with a severe countenance:

“In a moment of ignorance and greed, the Macaque has caused the great River of Life to change course; that's why it's flooding. The only

way to return the river to its original course is to retrieve the Pearl of Great Virtue from the Palace of the Moon in the Sea of Milk and throw it into the raging waters.

Hearing Prabhūtaratna's explanation, they turn towards the Macaque, now squatting off to one side, looking both terrified and guiltless; but none of them has the heart to give him a scolding.

"Well, just where is this Palace of the Moon in the Sea of Milk?" asks the Ranger, feeling a sense of responsibility for the Macaque's misdeed.

"It's on the other side of the Milky Way," says Prabhūtaratna. "You'd better set out immediately. And don't forget: If you are to succeed, you'll have to make the most of the power of wisdom, virtue, insight, and faith."

As they cross the Milky Way, the bashful Sea of Milk parts the clouds and sticks out its face.

"Ranger, what's that?" asks Keyura nervously.

Looking in the direction Keyura is pointing towards, they spot what appears to be an ivory-colored cloud slowly getting bigger. Curious, they draw closer to find out what it is.

"Si — — Si — — " Suddenly, the wind picks up and presses the clouds forwards. The white cloud takes advantage of the chaos to spread forwards; accompanied by the gravelly voice of the wind, the universe seems to rapidly spin.



“Careful!” calls out the Ranger, his voice echoing about. In a moment, the milky-white cloud draws near their feet, leaving them at a loss as to what to do. Suddenly, “kerplunk ——” the Macaque leaps straight into the milky-white cloud and disappears. Startled by the sight, they call out in unison:

“Macaque —— Come back!”

Their frantic call echoes through space, now loud, now faint; now near, now far. As though startled, the white cloud lies prostrate, as quiet as a cicada in winter.

“It’s water! This must be the Sea of Milk!” joyfully exclaims Water Jade.

Illuminated by the moonlight, the white cloud reveals its true appearance. Then, much to everyone’s relief, the Macaque breaks through the surface of the water.

Under the irresistible charm of the moonlight, small waves appear in the milk-white water, conveying the moonlight in all directions. Struck by the waves, the thick milk is rendered pure and fresh by the moonlight. Marveling at the sight, Keyura spontaneously stretches out her hands to scoop up a handful of moonlit water. Seemingly aware of her intention, the moon augments its brilliance. Witnessing the transformation, Water Jade calls out:

“Keyura, it seems that this Ocean of Milk is inscrutable to ordinary perception.”

After emerging from the Ocean of Milk, the Macaque has been

continuously capering around the Ranger's feet and calling out. Knowing that he must have seen something, the Canary flies out over the Ocean of Milk to find out what it was. After about as much time as it takes to drink a small cup of tea, the Canary comes flying back with several shimmering drops of water clinging to his feathers. Keyura extends her fingertip to touch one of the drops, but the drop evades her touch, as if it were alive; it also has a pleasant scent. Puzzled, Keyura asks the Canary:

“Where did you get these from?”

“It seems that these drops and the Ocean of Milk are one and the same. If the Canary leads the way, we might be able to locate the source of the Ocean of Milk,” says Water Jade while excitedly inspecting the drops.

“This Ocean of Milk in front of us is immeasurably wide and deep. How can we cross it?” asks Keyura. Reflecting for a moment, Flame replies:

“My light spectrum should be able to transport everyone across the Ocean of Milk.”

Thereupon, Flame uses her light spectrum to fly them all over the moonlit water. Like a slumbering cherub, the Ocean of Milk silently reclines in the glittering, fragrant embrace of the moon. Just as they are becoming spellbound by the dream-like scene, a dark cloud suddenly obscures the moon, causing the Ocean of Milk to disappear.



“Dong — dong — ” goes the rain as if striking an empty bottle, shattering the dark silence. Suddenly, the moon breaks through the dark cloud, again illuminating the Ocean of Milk. However, the echoing sound of a moment ago seems to have sent a ripple through Keyura’s mind. Then she notices that the Ocean of Milk is no longer placid:

“The small ripples are turning into waves!”

“Dong — ” the empty, bright echo sounds again. Intently waiting for the sound to come again, Water Jade traces its source and sees several glimmering, pearl-like drops of water appear in the empty darkness. Hurriedly tracing the faint trails of light they leave behind as they pass by, she says excitedly:

“Flame, if you look towards where the drops of water are falling from, you can see the source of the Ocean of Milk!”

Before Water Jade can finish, Flame has already used her light spectrum to swiftly trace the source of the faint light before it disappears. Suddenly, the cool moonlight becomes stronger, dissolving the faint light, and a towering, majestic palace appears, bringing Flame to a sudden halt.

Just as they are all looking on in amazement at the mirror-like image of the palace, the Macaque and the Canary dart over and without any hesitation enter the lapis lazuli palace.

“Dong — ” a bright sound springs forth, followed by its echo.

“It’s the sound of the drops of water!” happily exclaims Keyura.

“Let’s go in and have a look; perhaps we’re already at the source of the Ocean of Milk.”

As the musical tone just heard, somehow familiar, reverberates in Water Jade’s mind, she feels drawn to approach the palace.

This is no ordinary palace. Inside, the walls are covered with drops of water reflected by the transparent walls. Simultaneously both completely real and completely unreal, the brilliant drops vary in appearance, depending on the angle of the moonlight.

“Look! There’s a passage!” says Keyura, following the flight of the Canary and discovering a narrow passage marked by cairns. She leads the others in following it.

Above the twisting passage is the clear sky, and both sides are bounded by a wall of coarse rock covered with moss. Looking about as they traverse the winding passage, Water Jade quietly examines the quality of the moisture, and discovers a meander.

“Dong — — ” Suddenly the familiar sound of water fills their ears, followed by a cool mist and a pleasant fragrance seeping out of the cliff. Still observing closely, Water Jade notices several white drops of water flowing downstream on the meander, and immediately begins to follow it upstream, with the others close behind. “Dong — Dong — ” As the path narrows, the sound of the water becomes more frequent, and each time is accompanied by a wave of



mist that moistens the rocky surface of the path, making it slippery to walk on.

With both hands pressing against the moist rock walls, they walk on and on until the path suddenly comes to an end. Yet, the rising and falling sound of the water remains, as if right next to them; they anxiously search for a long time, but all to no avail. Then Water Jade places one ear against the rock wall and listens attentively. Observing her unusual behavior, the others notice fine bursts of mist issuing out of fissures in the rock wall. As if she has a well-devised plan, Keyura says:

“If we can push aside this rock wall, we’ll find a passage.”

They immediately unite their efforts and try to push the rock wall aside. In a few moments there is a loud rumble, whereupon the wall splits into two halves which slowly move apart. Then a mist issues from the opening, revealing a vast expanse of whiteness. Pushing aside the mist, Water Jade leads the way inside the opening. After a few steps, the mist slowly disappears, and a milky-white lake greets their eyes.

It appears to be a naturally formed place, and the lake is surrounded by a large number of rocks sculpted by time.

“How strange! The water is the same as the Ocean of Milk,” declares Keyura.

“Dong — — ” echoes the sound of the water dropping once again,

accompanied by waves of mist floating up from the ripples on the surface. “Dong — dong — ” goes the sound, as the surroundings begin to become visible. Water Jade notices that each time the water sounds, all her pores open and the mist wafts into her body. While searching for the source of the sound, she hears Keyura’s urgent words:

“Water Jade, come quick; I’ve found the source of the water sound!”

Water Jade excitedly runs over to where Keyura is standing at the foot of an old cinnamon tree. “Dong — ” Water Jade is awestruck by the clear and melodious sound. Keyura points out a spot on the rough trunk of the cinnamon tree oozing drops of white liquid which condense into globules and fall into the lake, producing the mist.

Water Jade finally realizes that the source of the Ocean of Milk is none other than this cinnamon tree in the Palace of the Moon! After living so close to water for such a long time, she has finally come to the homeland of the water, and come to understand the source of all the water in the universe! Suddenly, she dives into the pure waters of the Ocean of Milk. After a few moments, she emerges with an exquisite transparent pearl, and joyfully exclaims:

“This is the Pearl of Great Virtue!”

Taking the Pearl of Great Virtue back with them, they succeed in quelling the flood and returning the River of Life to its original course. Having seen the Ocean of Milk, that pure, fragrant mother of all water,



they now realize what is meant by the old saying, “The hundred rivers converge in the sea, then they lose their names; at the end of their long journey, they all return to their source.” Indeed, “Great virtue is like water”!

15. The Closed Water Lily

Today, the graceful Prabhūtaratna appears to Keyura and her companions; with much delight, they tell him all about their adventures over the past few days. Noticing the look of wisdom on Keyura's face, Prabhūtaratna happily tells her:

“In the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound there is a mysterious Closed Water Lily which conceals a time-space unknown to men. From time immemorial, it has been waiting for the right person to find it. Keyura, if you can unlock the mystery of the Closed Water Lily, then you will learn something as to the whereabouts of the Harp Boy.” As soon as he hears this, the Ranger asks:

“The Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound is boundlessly large, and none of us have ever seen the Closed Water Lily. Prabhūtaratna, can you lead us to the place where the Closed Water Lily grows?”

Prabhūtaratna is silent, leading Keyura to nervously say:

“I've gone to so many places in search of the Harp Boy, and along the way I've had so many amazing experiences. Through this I've learned that, as long as you don't fear hardship, and make the most of each opportunity, then yearning is transformed into Truth. Prabhūtaratna, please lead us to the Closed Water Lily.”

Seeing the eager and expectant expression in Keyura's eyes, the kindly Prabhūtaratna nods in agreement.



Guided by Prabhūtaratna, they pass over innumerable mountain ranges of connected peaks. The scenery in the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound is intensely interesting. From the rugged mountain paths all the way to the broad thoroughfares, everything has the look and feel of eternity. Seeing that everything is so precarious and uncertain, how can there be such a thing as eternal life? Whatever they see in the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound is Truth itself, leaving a deep impression on their hearts and minds.

After passing over a great many mountain chains overflowing with life, Prabhūtaratna takes them to a mountain where the rays of the sun are so intense that that it is entirely bereft of vegetation. Dizzy as they stand on the fissured ground, feeling as though they are being baked alive, they repeatedly entreat Prabhūtaratna to get them out of there. However, all he does is smile and look around, as he leisurely leads them further up the mountain.

That is, except for Keyura. Eager not to miss an opportunity to find the Harp Boy, she is perfectly willing to put up with the scorching heat and utters not a single word of protest. For she now knows that, in as much as the Harp Boy is a sage, he can't be seen by someone with only a modicum of virtue and wisdom. In order to fulfill her longstanding aspiration, long ago she resolved to never turn back, no matter how difficult things may get, even at the cost of her life. So now, even with her pretty face reddened by the fierce sun, her clear

eyes still shine with the light of her unshakable faith. Seeing that her remarkable determination far surpasses their own, her companions become all the more eager to help her find the Harp Boy.

As they pass over to the other side of the mountain, completely leaving behind the scorching rays of the sun, a cool wind rises. Prabhūtaratna takes them into a ravine devoid of vegetation, and then leads them along a circuitous route through the lengthening afternoon shadows. The further they go, the darker it gets, until they are enveloped in darkness. Finally, Prabhūtaratna stops at the mouth of a side ravine and tells them:

“This ravine is a small part of the Closed Water Lily; it leads directly to the center of the Closed Water Lily.

Now Keyura is really confused. All along she had been under the impression that the Closed Water Lily is an exceedingly lovely place, but the ravine they are in at present is utterly barren and desolate. Thinking along the same lines, Water Jade asks:

“How is it that the Closed Water Lily is a dark ravine, rather than a fragrant flower?”

With a knowing smile, Prabhūtaratna replies:

“The Closed Water Lily most certainly is the peerless queen of flowers; in addition to her matchless beauty, she brings much benefit to all living beings!”

“How, then, is it possible that this barren ravine is the Closed Water



Lily?” asks the Drunken Guest anxiously.

Originally, the Closed Water Lily was blessed with an abundance of sunshine, rain, and rich soil. Later on, however, there was a terrible earthquake which shook the entire cosmos and left a thick layer of dust on the Closed Water Lily. This was followed by innumerable further cataclysms, each of which deposited an additional layer of dust. It proved impossible to remove the dust, so it continued to accumulate on the Closed Water Lily until it was completely buried. What’s more, as the dust continued to accumulate over a long time, it turned into soil; finally, due to the relentless force of the wind and rain, the soil eventually turned into rock, the rocks which are now all around you. You see, this very ravine is the outer crust of the Closed Water Lily. This side ravine is the only passageway leading into the Closed Water Lily.

“But it’s so dark. Even if we do go in and try to find the Closed Water Lily, how can we ever find it?” exclaims Water Jade, walking up to the mouth of the side ravine to have a closer look.

“There’s no need to search. Inside the ravine there is a seed-lamp; all you have to do is take it further inside, and its light will cause the Closed Water Lily to bloom—the most inconceivable phenomenon in the entire universe,” explains Prabhūtaratna.

“But what’s a seed-lamp?” asks Keyura, eyes bulging with wonder.

“Keyura, for a hundred thousand years, this tiny seed-lamp has been continuously shining in the Closed Water Lily. This is why the dust-

shrouded Closed Water Lily has never withered and died. Only by making use of your wisdom will you be able to revive the Closed Water Lily. All that I've told you is just meant to guide you on your way; the rest is up to you. When the Closed Water Lily opens, then you will experience spontaneous freedom!" No sooner does Prabhūtaratna finish speaking than they realize that it's now so dark that they can't see their hands in front of their faces.

Not only is the side ravine pitch black, but it's also riddled with bumps and hollows, like so many hidden traps. As they stumble along in the darkness they vaguely make out the form of assorted stones strewn all around.

A mixture of hope and apprehension fills their hearts as they aimlessly grope about in the pitch black ravine.

"What if we take a wrong turn? Should we return to the mouth of the ravine?" asks the Drunken Guest, whereupon Keyura anxiously says:

"Prabhūtaratna has told us that during the course of innumerable earthquakes, the Closed Water Lily was covered over by dust and debris, and that's why it's hard to find. If we lose our courage and turn back now, we'll never find it.

Hearing Keyura's determination, the Ranger knows that she will never leave this ravine without first finding the Closed Water Lily. After thinking for a moment, he bends down, gropes around, finds two rocks, and knocks them together. He quickly discards them, and does



the same with other pairs of rocks, until he finally manages to produce a spark.

“Quick! Find some sticks that aren’t completely petrified so we can start a fire.” Spurred on by the Ranger’s discovery, they eagerly scour the ground for branches, which they turn into torches to help them find their way. Their confidence rekindled, they swiftly proceed deep into the ravine.

As they proceed, the ravine gets deeper and the cold wind gets stronger.

“Oh no — — ” they call out in unison as a stiff wind blows out all their torches, plunging them back into darkness. The Ranger quickly finds more flint and relights the torches, but the strong wind soon blows them out again. They go on like this, stumbling forwards while continually relighting their torches, until their feet are aching. Yet it seems that they haven’t really gotten anywhere; worst of all, the seed-lamp is nowhere in sight. Nonetheless, Keyura is as confident as ever that if the Closed Water Lily can remain in this deep canyon without withering, it must surely possess some kind of magical properties. As if mindful of the old adage, “You can’t catch a tiger without entering its den,” they proceed further and further into the progressively deep and narrow ravine.

Suddenly, the faint scent of sandalwood comes wafting in on the cool wind. Just as they are feeling bewildered and apprehensive, Flame notices a speck of light similar to a firefly on the wall of the ravine.

Only after closely observing it for quite some time does she realize that it's a tiny flame. Strangely, no matter how hard the wind blows, it doesn't get extinguished. She continues observing so intensively that she falls into a kind of trance, and is startled when Keyura lightly bumps into her, causing her to avert her gaze for a moment. When she looks back at the flame she notices that it's grown somewhat larger and is now moving upwards along the wall. Rushing forward, she shouts:

"Everybody, follow me; otherwise the seed-lamp will go out!"

Gripped by the urgency in Flame's voice, the others rush to keep up with her, even though they themselves haven't seen a thing.

"I see the seed-lamp!"

"I see it too!"

"It's so small I can hardly see it!"

Instantly, their excited voices flood the canyon.

"Ugh!" Keyura calls out as she trips and falls after stepping into a hole. The Ranger stops to see what's happened, but as soon as he starts to look around, Keyura, ignoring the pain, leaps up, smiles, and continues chasing after the seed-lamp, as does the Ranger, his heart filled with admiration and concern for Keyura.

"Hurry up! I almost can't see them," says Keyura to the Ranger. Just as they are getting nervous, they hear Flame excitedly calling out:

"Hurry! Over here!" Keyura and the Ranger leap up and rush in the direction of the voice. In a moment, they find the others, by now out of



breath as they keep their eyes firmly fixed on the seed-lamp.

All they can see is the incredible seed-lamp wandering about.

“It seems to be playing hide-and-seek with us. One moment it flies off without a trace, only to suddenly reappear right in front of our eyes; sometimes it remains perfectly still in mid-air, but when we almost have it, it swiftly flies off ever further into this dark canyon,” says Flame, keeping her gaze firmly fixed on the seed-lamp all the while.

As Keyura listens to Flame’s account and intently observes the seed-lamp, the Ranger looks around and wonders out loud, “It looks like we’ve reached the end of the canyon and can’t go any further.”

“Look! The seed-lamp has stopped moving!” shouts Keyura.

After observing for a moment, they all cautiously approach the seed-lamp, their hearts throbbing with anticipation. When they are right next to the seed-lamp, Keyura, unable to resist, stretches out her hand to take hold of it, whereupon it darts upwards. Thereupon, the Ranger, the Drunken Guest, and Water Jade join the chase, but the seed-lamp nimbly evades their grasp by darting in all directions, leaving them thoroughly flustered. Seeing how discombobulated they are, Flame hits upon an idea and says:

“The seed-lamp is the light of wisdom, so we have to use wisdom to bring out its latent potential.” Thereupon, while standing perfectly still in the dark, Flame closely observes the seed-lamp for a moment and then her entire body begins to generate a brilliant light, as well as a mild sound that the others have never heard before, and then slowly

approaches the seed-lamp while saying:

“Endowed with the fire element, all life radiates heat and light; the fire element is also the basis of the beauty of the Closed Water Lily! Oh Flame-lamp, quickly display your radiance and dispel this endless darkness.” Keyura and the others are not sure what Flame intends to do, but can only see that she looks utterly solemn and has entered into a trance state. All they can do is silently look on and observe her every movement.

Seemingly understanding Flame’s words, the seed-lamp slowly begins to give off a dazzling light. Sensing the power of the seed-lamp’s past vows, Flame slowly extends here arms in a gesture of greeting, whereupon the seed-lamp, rather like a docile pixie, slowly floats over and lands in Flame’s palms.

“Hong-long — — ” As soon as it lands in Flame’s palms, the seed-lamp gives off a dazzling light blazing out in all directions, as powerful as a thunderbolt and accompanied by a series of deafening crashes. They all watch in amazement as the walls of the canyon come tumbling down.

“Flame, the canyon is collapsing!” they call out in terror. However, Flame doesn’t hear a word they say; in fact, she doesn’t even notice anything except a resplendent flame filling the sky and the faint image of a blooming lotus inside it.

“Hong-long — — ” The same deafening sound reverberates up to the horizon, as the walls of the canyon fall into millions of pieces.



Just then they notice that the ground they are standing on is about to collapse, but it's too late to escape, and down they fall, terror stricken, through the swirling dust. As they fall, an incomparably beautiful light comes bursting up from below, instantly dispersing the darkness and expelling the dust.

The Closed Water Lily has reappeared in all its purity, expelling the ancient dust!

As they look on in amazement, they safely land on an incomparably soft, light-yellow carpet, whereupon their fear subsides.

As if in a dream, they happily find themselves in the incomparably lovely and fragrant abode of the Closed Water Lily—the Lotus-treasury World. Presently, now that the seed-lamp has been found and the Closed Water Lily has been freed from the ancient dust, Flame finally comes to realize that she too has a precious seed-lamp of her own.....

16. Homeland of the Wind

By the time Keyura and her companions reluctantly leave the Closed Water Lily and return to the City of Prabhūtaratna, the winter cold has already arrived.

Riding in on the cold north wind, embracing the rhythm of the musical tone permeating the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound, the densely clustered snowflakes gracefully descend from the wide-open firmament and gracefully dance their way to the snow-covered ground.

Infinity; the community of life encompassing the past, present, and future; the pure luminosity of the spirit; the effortlessness by which nature accomplishes all its functions—these are the things which make up the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound, a realm outside of time and space. This is the realm of the sacred, where permanence, bliss, self, and purity all seep out from every life form, every phenomenon. Even during the harsh winter, the life force springs forth.

Having just left the Closed Water Lily with its abundance of warm sunlight, Keyura and her companions have difficulty adapting to this vast expanse of white—the snow-covered mountains, the frozen rivers and lakes, all the vegetation buried in snow, clinging to life. That is, not until they again meet up with Prabhūtaratna, who introduces them to the richness of life which exists in the depth of winter, an aspect of



the universal life force they had never considered before.

Prabhūtaratna is quite unmoved by external appearances; for him, each season is pregnant with meaning and rich in marvels. Still, he is quite aware that the seasons and scenery do have an effect on the thoughts and emotions of Keyura and her companions. Thus, out of consideration for his guests, he kindly introduces them to the wintry delights of the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound.

With the wise guidance of Prabhūtaratna, they take a fresh look and come to appreciate the frozen landscape in its many forms. They also gradually begin to recognize the miraculous way by which the universe teaches without using words.

As the snow gets heavier and the temperature drops to forty or fifty below zero, the air thins out, making Keyura worry that it will get even thinner, and ultimately disappear altogether. She presents her concern to Prabhūtaratna, who consolingly replies:

“The air is formless and signless; such obstacles are difficult to eliminate. It may look like the air is going to completely disappear; actually, it’s only temporarily concealed. All you have to do is find where it’s concealed, and the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound will again have lots of fresh air.”

“Seeing that air is formless and signless, how can we find the place where it’s concealed and release it?” asks the Ranger.

Seeing their perplexity, Prabhūtaratna explains further:

“Nature is highly adept at self-regulation. In addition to providing

everything needed by living beings, it's also the greatest teacher in the universe. By taking nature as your guide, you can surely succeed in finding the sanctuary where the air is hiding and unearth the seed of the wind.”

The winter scenery in the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound is truly exceptional. Defying the bitter cold, Keyura and her companions search the icy landscape high and low for the seed of the wind. At one point in their search, mistakenly thinking that the air might be trapped in a mountain cave filled with ice, they spend several months excavating the ice; another time they go without food or sleep for days on end while searching around a frozen lake..... Leaving no stone unturned, they search amongst the coral-like ice clusters, the frozen ponds high up in the snow-swept mountains, and down to the last blade of frozen grass.

On and on they go, searching every last nook and cranny in the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound. But they still don't know what the wind might actually look like. It seems that the air is getting ever thinner, and ever colder. They gradually begin to lose hope, and even start to wonder if they'd better leave the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound before the air disappears altogether. After so much effort without any results, Keyura begins to doubt that finding the seed of the wind will be of any use in her search for the Harp Boy.

By now, everyone is dejected; that is, except for the Ranger, who is as



determined as ever. Sure that the seed of the wind is buried somewhere in the snow and ice, he encourages the others by saying:

“Arriving in the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound is a stroke of good luck. As Prabhūtaratna has said, there are many treasures of wisdom hidden away here! This is a precious opportunity to encounter life in its original condition. Don’t lose hope! We can surely succeed in making the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound once again brim over with fresh air.”

“Ranger, is it really so important for us to find the air?” asks Water Jade, giving expression to what’s on everybody’s mind.

“Water Jade, under normal conditions we don’t think about how precious the air really is; in fact, we usually aren’t even aware of its existence. Yet it’s said, ‘Life is impermanent; it can end in the space of a breath.’ The air here is now so thin that we are having a hard time just breathing, and this is having a negative effect on our minds. If we don’t find the seed of the wind before the air completely disappears, how can we survive?”

“All we have to do is leave the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound and go to some other place where air is plentiful; then we’ll be safe and sound!”

“Yes, but leaving the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound is not so easily done; it would take quite some time,” calmly replies the Ranger while looking up towards the towering peaks to the east. Suddenly, he has an idea:

“Ice and snow are produced from the moisture contained in the air, so they must surely contain the secret of the air. All life requires air; that’s why there is so much of it. It can’t possibly be found in an ordinary snow drift, so how about if we climb up to the glacial mountain and try to find it there?”

Unable to quickly leave the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound, their only hope for survival is to place their trust in the Ranger, brave the bone-chilling cold, and climb up the towering glacial mountain.

The summit of the glacial mountain is like a fairyland of ice and snow. Peering up through a break in the snow clouds occluding the horizon, they see the ancient glacial mountain, appearing like some translucent world of lapis lazuli, and instantly forget all about their hardship and discomfort.

Tempered by the elements over millions of years, the highest peak in the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound has become a glittering glacial plateau. Keyura and her companions are amazed to see that the pristine snow and ice have collected into a basin filled with lovely natural ice sculptures. Even more amazing are the ice pillars and hanging valleys formed where the side glaciers meet the glacial plateau.

As soon as they arrive in this fairyland of ice and snow, they begin searching the glaciers and ice fields for the hiding place of the wind. So focused are they on finding the seed of the wind that they hardly notice how enchanting the scenery is.



Good luck is the result of diligence! Today, while following a glacier upwards, the Ranger unexpectedly comes upon a broad ice field with extremely hard ice and surrounded by innumerable icy peaks which, illuminated by the brilliant sunlight, produce seven-colored rainbows, both dense and thin. While Keyura and the others happily scour between the gorgeous rainbows, the Ranger notices that inside each of the peaks are a great many round and transparent pearls. After observing for some time, he excitedly announces:

“A huge number of air bubbles are sealed inside these ice peaks! This must be what Prabhūtaratna meant by the seed of the wind!”

Much surprised by the Ranger’s discovery, the others excitedly take a closer look at the air bubbles which have been trapped in the ice for aeons, while thinking of ways to release them. They soon discover that this is not going to be easy, for, having been compressed so many times over such a long time, the ice is as hard as steel.

“There must have been a great blizzard, during which these air bubbles were unable to escape and got sealed into the ice!” says the Ranger apprehensively. Watching as the others excitedly try to dig into the thick, hard ice, he says:

“This ice has become extremely hard over a vast length of time. It’s going to take a great amount of force to break through it; the way you’re going at it is of no use at all.”

“What’s more, even if we were able to chisel away a part of the ice, the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound is so large that it really

wouldn't be of any use. What we really need to do is demolish all the ice mountains and the entire ice field.”

“Ranger, how can we possibly do that?” asks Keyura, whereupon the Ranger falls silent.

They've finally found the seed of the wind, but freeing it from its icy enclosure so that it can again circulate throughout the universe is another story altogether.

They try everything they can think of to break through the ice, but all to no avail. As the others sit silent and dejected, the Ranger, refusing to give up hope, paces back and forth while pondering the situation.

“Ranger, it's no use. Let's give up!”

Listening to Flame's words, the Ranger hits upon an idea, runs up to her, and urgently says:

“I've got it! Flame, I need your help.”

“What? How could I possibly help?” asks Flame, thoroughly perplexed.

“Heat! We can use heat to melt the ice! Flame, if you can radiate a large amount of heat, perhaps it will melt the ice.”

“This —— ” At first Flame hesitates to agree, but is then convinced by the Ranger's urgent and earnest expression, and says:

“Okay, I'll give it a try!”

As the others look on expectantly, Flame enters a state of deep concentration, gathers in all her energies, and begins to radiate heat.

Before long, however, Flame is utterly exhausted; some of the snow



has melted, but the ice is as solid as before. Disappointed, they all make haste to relieve Flame. Now, even the Ranger's hope is waning, as he stares dejectedly at the mountain of ice.

After some time, as they drift off in their weariness, a tumultuous scraping noise rises up from the glacier. Startled out of his sleep, the Ranger looks around to find out where the sound came from. He soon discovers that the biggest and tallest glacier is slowly slipping forward. As it turns out, the noise is the result of the glaciers scraping against each other. After observing for a while, he discovers that the glaciers are shifting.

"Why are the glaciers shifting?" the Ranger asks himself. Then he notices a rippling light at the bottom of the glacier and exclaims:

"Water" Oh — — it must have been melted by Flame!" Then he notices that the glacier, having reached an incline, is picking up speed and about to crash into another glacier, whereupon he cries out:

"Everybody get up! The glaciers are about to crash together!" instantly rousing everybody to their feet.

"Hong-long —— " In an instant the glaciers collide with a thundering crash, shooting fragments of ice all about. Setting off a chain reaction, the other glaciers come crashing down and burst into pieces, followed by burst upon burst of powerful winds flying up in all directions..... Finally, the seed of the wind has been freed from its icy containers, and happily streams up and merges with the atmosphere. As the cool air, incomparably fresh and pure, completely pervades the Realm

of the Awe-inspiring Sound, it also ripples the garments of Keyura and her companions, now enjoying a sense of ease they've never felt before.

Watching excitedly as plumes of ice and snow fly up from the colliding glaciers, the Ranger suddenly feels as though all along he has been bound by some unknown shackles. But when the air bubbles are released and fly up into the heavens, he feels that this chronic sense of burden is also released, whereupon he enters a state of profound tranquility.

As the wet snow falls thick and fast all around, the Ranger resembles Guanyin. Standing on the summit of the lofty, snow-swept mountains, he observes the seeds of the wind breaking out of their enclosures in the ancient ice, clearing away the dust and impediments, freely permeating every mountain and river in the universe.



17. The Sky Youth

Now that the cold winter has finally passed, the melting snow fills the chilly streams and the earth sings its annual song of rebirth, rousing the flora and fauna from their long slumber. After a long hibernation, all things vigorously spring back to life. Everywhere flowers bloom, warblers take to flight, and butterflies meander; the dense spring air permeates throughout the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound.

Having collected innumerable flowers of wisdom, Keyura and her companions are overflowing with joy. Yet, witnessing everything bursting to life in riotous confusion makes them eager to continue their search. Thus they resume traveling about the infinitely charming galaxy, as if in a beautiful dream.

At the height of spring, when the Milky Way is at its most charming, the Sky Youth travels the galaxy, clad in dark green, carrying a zither, following the tracks of spring, in search of a joyous fairy. Proud and imposing by nature, the rigor of incessant travel and the impermanence of nature instill him with a sense of restraint. With his dark-purple lotus eyes, he ceaselessly hunts for the secrets of heaven and earth.

From time immemorial, in the surpassingly beautiful Milky Way the four seasons go round and round in a colorful pageant. After returning so many millions of times, the spring, as exuberant as ever, has decided to try to use the rope of affection to lasso the Milky Way and

slow it down a bit. Yet, coursing through the lovely Milky Way, the beautiful scenes of spring, as ephemeral as a fleeting cloud, don't delay the Sky Youth; without so much as breaking his stride, he continues eagerly searching high and low for a joyous fairy.

Ever since he was old enough to understand, the Sky Youth has been told that life is as ephemeral as the morning dew. He has also been told that eternal life can be obtained by finding a joyous fairy. It's said that these joyous fairies came into being along with the universe and are present throughout the Milky Way. Sky believes that having an appearance which surpasses that of ordinary mortals is a great fortune. Yet, he has a certain empty, lonely feeling which makes him feel that if he fails to find a joyous fairy, then he will drift along forever, lost in the restless universe.

Everything in the Milky Way arises and passes away; even the stars one day drop from the sky, for they too are subject to the cycle of origination, continuation, decay, and dissolution. At the same time, when the necessary causes and conditions are present, there appear new galaxies bearing the seeds of life. Year round, Sky pilots a silvery white sail boat throughout the ever-changing Milky Way, bent on finding a joyous fairy. One time he happened across a huge ship with brilliant lights. He soon became friendly with the youthful-looking captain, and they spent many a long night exchanging stories about their travels in the Milky Way. Moved by the story of Sky's search for



a joyous fairy, upon parting ways, from amongst the many treasures he had on board, the old captain pulled out an ancient zither which constantly gives off a soft glow. Gifting it to Sky, he solemnly advised him:

“My boy, this ancient zither is called ‘Space’; it’s my most precious treasure. You don’t even have to pluck the strings, for it produces a pure, heavenly melody all by itself. These joyous fairies you’re searching for; they’re the most dashing and unrestrained beings in the entire universe. The sound of this zither might be able to attract one. Take it; it will bring you good luck!”

When the old captain placed the zither into Sky’s hands, it suddenly began to produce a charming tune, as a way of expressing the deep gratitude that Sky felt, but could not put into words. Having his innermost feelings expressed so beautifully brought tears to his eyes.

After waving goodbye to the old captain, holding the zither under his arm, Sky continued his search for a joyous fairy. Day and night the zither wafts its pure sound throughout the Milky Way, eagerly calling out to the fairies. Yet the joyous fairies have never appeared! His heart bound in an intricate web woven of hope and disappointment, Sky keeps his sails raised to the wind, year in and year out, scouring the Milky Way.

Although a lovely spring is in full swing when Keyura and her companions arrive in the Milky Way, for Keyura it doesn’t compare to

the Clouded Bamboo Forest where she once met the Harp Boy. Today, Keyura suddenly hears the hauntingly beautiful sounds of the ancient zither wafting through the Milky Way, stirring up her deep yearning for the Harp Boy.

The mysterious sound of the zither seems to stray into Keyura's ears, and stay there. While the sound lingers in her heart, a vague image of the musician suddenly comes to her. At first she took no enjoyment in the beautiful spring scenery; now, however, the sound of the zither has aroused in her a new sense of hope, and she finally begins to join her companions in appreciating this lovely season in the Milky Way.

“Look! It looks like a sailboat!”

Following the direction of Keyura's gesture, they see a brilliant white sail coursing through the glimmering stars.

As they look out towards the curious sight, Sky also spots them, happily frolicking amongst the flowers, whereupon he says to himself:

“I've been searching the Milky Way for so long now, but still haven't found a single joyous fairy. Perhaps these people might be able to tell me where they are hiding!” Thereupon he changes course and heads straight for Keyura and her companions.

“Isn't that the person in the image produced by Quark's C-D ROM drive?” asks the Drunken Guest with much surprise.

“You're right! It's the youth we saw in the seed-image!”

Sky adeptly pilots his craft into the clusters of flowers, exactly as it was portrayed in the seed-image.



As the surprised Keyura gazes upon the youth, the zither suddenly begins to produce a spacious melody, whereupon the colorful flowers begin to dance. A good many drop from their branches and flutter through boundless space, carried by the spring wind, moved by the tune, dancing happily with the butterflies and bees. At that moment, all the living beings in the flower thicket are drawn by the sound of the zither into an exquisite spiritual realm.

“I’m Sky. I’ve been sailing the Milky Way for many years searching for a joyous fairy. Have you happen to have seen any?” politely asks Sky as he climbs down from his boat while holding the zither under his arm, his clear voice serving as a rest in the music.

“What’s a joyous fairy?” asks the Ranger.

“Day and night, for years on end, I’ve been going around the Milky Way in this sailboat searching for a joyous fairy, yet I’ve never even caught a glimpse of one. Talk about embarrassment! It’s said that the joyous fairies are the essence of life itself, and that they are the happiest beings in the universe.”

“If you don’t know what they look like, how can you search for them?”

Faced with such a poignant question, his past experience comes rising up in front of him and his ancient zither begins to produce a melancholy tune. Struck by the purity and innocence in Keyura’s curious expression, Sky recounts his entire story—why he’s searching for a joyous fairy, how he acquired the zither, all the places his search

has taken him.....

Having also experienced so much hardship while traversing innumerable worlds, Keyura is moved by Sky's story and spontaneously decides to help him in his quest. Yet, she knows that it's very difficult to find a joyous fairy, for the universe is vast. Further, it requires the right approach; otherwise, a joyous fairy can be standing right next to you and you wouldn't even know it.

"Why don't we ask Prabhūtaratna about this? He will surely know where the joyous fairies can be found!" says Flame, whereupon a hopeful expression lights up everyone's face.

Sensing that he is needed, Prabhūtaratna uses his supernatural power to immediately appear before them. Keyura is eager to tell him about Sky, but he already knows. With his bright smiling countenance, he says:

"Joyous fairies can be found in ancient amber. Moreover, they are the animating spirit of this ancient zither, Space. By using the music spontaneously produced by Space, you can summon a joyous fairy."

"But where is the ancient amber?" asks Keyura anxiously.

"Keyura, there are quite a few species of evergreen trees which secrete a fragrant resin. After being buried for millions of years it fossilizes into amber, either translucent or transparent. The amber in which the joyous fairies are ensconced can be found in an ancient pine forest in the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound."

"But what does a joyous fairy look like?"



“Sky, the joyous fairy is the happiest, freest being in the entire universe. When a joyous fairy is released from an amber and soars up into the boundless sky, all beings will become happy and entirely free of worry. However, the fairy doesn’t have a fixed physical form. His happy appearance is just a magically produced expression of his joy upon being freed.”

Following Prabhūtaratna’s guidance, carrying his zither, Sky takes Keyura and the others to a vast primordial forest of towering old pines with a yellow transparent substance oozing out from their gnarled roots.

“This is the resin which fossilizes into amber,” says the Ranger, rubbing a finger against the sticky substance.

They scour the forest for several days, but the ambers they find are mostly quite small. Nonetheless, Sky hopefully carries on the search. Ever by his side, his zither, as if knowing that a fairy is nearby, produces a wonderful lilting melody which makes everyone feel buoyant and free of all anxiety. It also sways the branches on the ancient trees; draws in the white clouds, dancing down from the lofty peaks; changes the melody of the waterfalls and springs; and attracts innumerable lovely animals to listen to its remarkable sound.

Suddenly a great earthquake strikes and the zither begins to play a mournful song.

“Watch out! The ground is splitting apart!” warns the Ranger.

Just as they are about to flee to the relative safety of a rocky outcrop, the earth makes an ear-splitting rumble and a huge, transparent amber springs out of the crack in the earth.

“This must be the ancient amber! The ancient amber has appeared!” they all shout out excitedly as they watch the huge amber slowly emerge out of the ground.

As Sky looks on in amazement, the huge amber of transparent yellow-brown shoots out of the fissure. Just then, the sun pierces through the clouds and shines a brilliant golden light onto the amber, revealing a purple-and-blue butterfly sealed inside. Thereupon the zither, still held firmly under Sky’s arm, changes its sound to a stirring melody, both happy and sad, to summon the fairy. The sound of the zither is seemingly able to penetrate right through the thick amber, and the butterfly begins to wake from its primordial slumber, first stirring its powder blue body and then opening its delicate purple wings in time with the melody!

“It’s a joyous fairy!” exclaims Keyura, startling the fossil inside the amber. “Ping — — ” suddenly the amber cracks apart, whereupon the joyous fairy flutters its wings and flies up into the cloudless sky. Looking on, Sky feels as though his spirit has become one with the fairy, and that his body has been cleansed in a sacred pool, rendered utterly pure and free. At the same time, the zither quivers and begins to play a song of joy. Then the fairy flies about in the boundless sky, sprinkling down seeds of joy.



“The joyous fairy has transformed into a huge nebulous cluster!” exclaims Sky, all along tracing the Fairy’s course through the Milky Way.

As they all watch in amazement, the nebulous cluster grows bigger and bigger, as if it is about to fill the entire Milky Way. Then the nebulous cluster miraculously transforms into a heavenly butterfly, appearing like a great Chiliocosm, bringing into existence world upon beautiful world.

Watching as the butterfly grows ever larger in the Milky Way, Sky suddenly understands everything! He realizes that ultimate happiness is just like the butterfly he’s watching up in the sky, utterly free. Now he too is profoundly happy!

18. Seashell Sand

As the enchanting spring is washed away by the surging rivers, a new scene gradually appears. Now the sun is at its strongest, and Keyura and her companions are intent on discovering the secret of arising and passing away.

Presently, Prabhūtaratna leads them to a great sea they've never seen before. Its blue color is so unusual that it makes people want to slice off a piece and taste it! Under the clear sky, this sea of utterly pure water is so magnanimous that it doesn't mind a bit when the sunlight, clouds, and waves frolic on its chest, nor when the elegant sea birds use it as their playground. What's more, the sand along its shoreline is incomparably pure and colorful.

The majestic breadth of spirit of the sea and sky subtly puts Keyura and her companions in an expansive frame of mind. Wave upon wave, the tide appears like a white horse galloping up from the depths, its white mane rising and falling with the light mist blown up by the wind—fine, soft, and cool.

As they walk barefoot along the shore, skirting the snow-white surf, Keyura takes a keen interest in the fine, pure sand of various light shades. Full of curiosity, she turns to Prabhūtaratna and asks:

“Why is this sand so colorful and fine?”



“This is not ordinary sand; it’s called ‘seashell sand,’ and it’s quite rare.”

Her curiosity piqued, Keyura picks up a handful of sand, takes a closer look, and asks:

“Why is it called ‘seashell sand’?”

“In this sea there are many pearl oysters, and this sand is made of their pulverized shells; that’s why it’s called ‘seashell sand.’”

“But oysters live at the bottom of the sea. How did their shells rise up and become all this sand?” asks the Ranger, picking up a shell.

“Through the force of the tide! Ranger, there exists a mysterious gravitational force between celestial bodies; it causes ocean currents and makes the level of the sea rise and fall at regular intervals. The rising and falling of the water draws the shells from the sea bed and deposits them on the shore, where the constant pounding of the waves gradually turns them into grains of sand,” says Prabhūtaratna in a leisurely voice, gazing out into the distance.

Animated by the warm sunlight, a cool breeze blows away all the heart’s impurities. Following the pounding surf, they collect delicately wrought shells while learning from Prabhūtaratna the marvelous story of the seashell sand.

Because Keyura is so kind hearted and so very fond of beauty, wherever she goes, angelic fairies display their loveliest appearance for her to see. Keyura finds beauty in everything she sees. Naturally, then, the indescribable beauty of the shoreline makes a deep impression on

her.

The tide quietly recedes, widening the beach, revealing the smooth, moist sand studded with seashells. As Keyura and her friends walk along collecting colorful shells, the impish Macaque joins in, looking around furtively, daringly rushing out to scour the piles of sand still covered with foam. Before long, he picks up a broken shell, excitedly runs over to the Ranger, and squeals loudly.

Curious, the Ranger takes the shell in his hand and discovers that in the center there is a tiny pearl. Having always lived in the mountains, the Ranger has never seen a pearl; fascinated, he studies it for a long time in the sunlight. Alerted by the squeal of the Macaque, the others come to the Ranger's side to have a look, whereupon Prabhūtaratna says:

“It's a small pearl!”

“It's hard to believe that such an ordinary shell can contain such a beautiful pearl!” says Flame, examining the broken shell.

“Does every shell contain such a lovely pearl?”

“Drunken Guest, every oyster has the potential to produce a pearl, but not every one does so.”

“Why is that?” asks Keyura.

“Keyura, all living beings have not only a physical body, but also an invisible spirit; yet, they aren't necessarily aware of its existence. And even if they do know that they possess this sort of treasure, they may not be willing to sacrifice material comforts and make the



effort to dig up that buried treasure. It's the same with oysters; there are innumerable oysters in the sea, but only a tiny number of them produce pearls."

Prabhūtaratna's words penetrate deep into Keyura's heart, as she thoughtfully studies the tiny pearl in the waning sunlight.

"Prabhūtaratna, just how does an oyster produce a pearl?" asks Keyura, wishing that the oyster could speak for itself. Despite feeling somewhat unsettled, the light of wisdom still shines bright in her clear eyes.

"Keyura, in the middle of the sea is a wonderful place called the 'Kingdom of the Clams.' Amongst the many pearl oysters found there, there is one ancient oyster which contains the biggest, loveliest pearl in the entire universe. If you can find it, you will understand everything there is to know about oysters and pearls."

Seemingly in response to a tacit cue, the azure sea spreads apart and reveals the seabed. Instantly, a powerful current comes rumbling over the horizon, churning up a vast spindrift, as Keyura and her companions look on with awe and terror.

"Impressive, isn't it? If you follow this current, it will take you to the bottom of the sea, where you will find lots of pearl oysters. And, if you're lucky, you may even find the unrivalled Great Pearl."

As he speaks, Prabhūtaratna leisurely steps out onto the current, while the others stand on the shore looking at one another, wondering what to do. Suddenly, the Canary flies out towards Prabhūtaratna, prompting

Keyura and then the others to throw caution to the wind and do the same.

Cutting its way through the middle of the sea, the rumbling current drowns out all other sounds. Though still apprehensive, they follow Prabhūtaratna as he serenely ambles over the strange current. As they traverse the watery pathway paved with tossing spindrift, Keyura discovers that within the current there is a certain kind of serenity.

They soon come to a transparent tunnel leading down to the bottom of the sea. Entering the tunnel, they are so amazed by the wonderful sights that they soon forget their fear. As they proceed, innumerable treasures of the deep sea appear before their dazzled eyes—submarine trenches; citadels made of reef rock; deepwater fish frolicking in the refracted sunlight; coral and water plants of various colors..... Seeing such sights for the first time, they are filled with astonishment.

The further they go, the more wonderful the sights become. In their amazement, they have no idea how long they've been walking, nor how far. Suddenly, a dazzling light appears up ahead and the current slows to a gentle swirl. After some time, the light gradually fades—they have reached the mysterious bottom of the sea, where the current merges into a silvery, uplifting light.

“Wow! So many oysters!”

All that can be seen inside the silvery light are innumerable oysters of all shapes and colors. As though Water Jade's exclamation has aroused a sleeping world, all of a sudden, one by one, the oysters begin to



move, making a low swishing sound. When Keyura squats down to take a closer look, the necklace she is wearing, seeming to reflect the silvery light, suddenly begins to produce a resplendent glow which illuminates the oysters. In a moment, as if by some unseen cue, all the oysters open and reveal their pearls, casting a lovely glow of wavering light onto this enchanted, silvery palace at the bottom of the sea!

“Oh! There really are beautiful pearls inside the oysters!” Keyura says in amazement.

“Now, just how were these pearls formed?” asks the Ranger, brimming over with curiosity.

“Oysters are endowed with an incredible amount of fortitude and endurance. An Oyster produces a pearl when a grain of sand happens to enter inside its shell and begins to irritate its flesh. Instead of expelling the foreign object, the oyster patiently endures it for years and years, during which time it secretes a remarkable substance which hardens around the grain of sand one layer at a time—this becomes the pearl!” explains Prabhūtaratna.

The fabulous Kingdom of the Clams was born of the affection and fortitude of the Oysters; behind all the beauty and splendor is their life-long practice of patient endurance. Presently, Keyura begins to ponder and puzzle over the past—the Harp Boy and the unknowable future—and then suddenly remembers that she has come here to find the Great Pearl.

As if responding to Keyura’s thoughts, a colorful light suddenly

emerges from within a thicket of graceful water plants. Curious as to its source, they draw near, but as soon as they do, the plants, though seemingly delicate, bunch together so tightly that none of them, try as they may, can get near the source of the light.

The intense light attracts the pure-hearted Keyura. She suddenly begins to hear the music of the Harp Boy, causing her to forget all about the tight network of water plants blocking the way. Free of extraneous thoughts, she follows the music and easily enters into the thicket. Amazed, the Ranger and the others try to follow Keyura, but the water plants resolutely block their path.

While the others look on, Keyura listens to the pleasant sound and draws near to the source of the light. Then the music comes to an abrupt stop. As if in a dream, Keyura sees a huge oyster, several times larger than she is, leisurely lying amongst the water plants, with the colorful light streaming out of the gap between its two halves. Keyura asks herself:

“Is this the oyster Prabhūtaratna was talking about?”

Attracted by the bright light, she spontaneously draws close to the oyster and begins to tearfully tell her sad story. As she does, her necklace once again begins to give off a colorful glow of interwoven beams of light. Straight away, the soft, excellent light surrounds Keyura.

“Oh — This light; somehow it seems to be the manifestation of that beautiful aspiration I’ve kept to myself for so long.”



As Keyura freely pours out all her deepest longings and aspirations, the oyster slowly opens, revealing a resplendent, luminous, perfectly round pearl inside.

“Keyura, this beautiful pearl offered to you by the Oyster is the fruit of its tremendous tolerance, fortitude, and patience, the same qualities which carry the spiritual aspirant all the way to enlightenment.....” From within the brilliant light, the voice of Prabhūtaratna comes gently rolling out. In her mind’s eye Keyura sees a vast expanse of shell sand on which are arrayed innumerable enlightened sages of the past, present, and future, roaming about innumerable worlds, all lovely, stately, and august.

19. The Empty Illusion

Having just awakened from the embrace of the Milky Way, the sea shrouds a dream. Illuminated by the moon descending in the west, the tall bodhi trees border the sandy shoreline, embellishing the summer scene.

After passing the night playing hide-and-seek with the stars, the white clouds float up from the boundary where sea meets sky. After such a long and marvelous journey, Keyura and her companions have a new way of looking at things. Having inadvertently come to this serene and pure forest of bodhi trees, they eagerly look up to gaze at the moon and count the stars, while making a plan to seize the first golden ray of the sun when it comes floating up from the bottom of the sea. Presently, they patiently wait for the sun under the verdant bodhi trees. “Hey! Keyura!”

A familiar voice emerges from the trees, breaking the silence of early morning.

“You’re going to love this!” says Quark, walking out from the amongst the bodhi trees, with a broad grin only half visible in the misty light of dawn. The C-D ROM drive hanging on his chest rattles and shakes while giving off a bright light, as if it wants to drive off the mist.

“Oh! It’s Quark. How did you get here?” asks Keyura, thoroughly surprised.



“Isn’t it strange how we meet here in such a distant place?” says Quark, holding up his C-D ROM drive with obvious satisfaction, explaining:

“This little treasure helped me find you, friends! Did the seed-images help you find what you were looking for?”

With the air of a host, Quark goes on and on telling them all about his C-D ROM drive and all the amazing things it can do. Seeing that he has gained their confidence, he generously says:

“Keyura, have you not yet found the Harp Boy?” When Keyura makes a slight smile without saying a word, Quark understands and says:

“I’ll use the C-D ROM drive’s seed-images to find some more clues as to the whereabouts of the Harp Boy!”

Without waiting for Keyura’s reply, Quark opens up the C-D ROM drive, “Ka-la — — ka-la — — ” and prints out one seed-image after another, some clear, others blurred. The Ranger and the others concernedly discuss Keyura’s seed-images, having completely forgotten about the sunrise.

Keyura and her companions are once again taken in by the seed-images, completely forgetting Prabhūtaratna’s words as well as their experience in the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound.

Although they have lost track of their original purpose, the sun has not—suddenly its golden sword of wisdom slices apart the water and clouds, and then its bright red face comes bounding up with a splash.

“Keyura, it’s the sun!”

The Canary’s excited voice brings them all back to their senses. It also seems to have some kind of effect on Quark’s C-D ROM drive, which begins to vibrate wildly and produce blurry seed-images. Keyura, the Ranger, Flame, the Drunken Guest, and Water Jade—they all appear as if in a state of deep concentration as they stand motionless under the bodhi trees watching the golden orb of the sun mount the horizon, as a cool breeze blows in.

Rising up with indomitable joy, the sun weaves a golden tapestry of light, quickly filling the boundless vault of heaven. Suddenly, the golden light begins to revolve, forming into a kind of screen on which are displayed all the major events in Keyura’s life.

It seems that time is moving backwards.....

Keyura at six years old, eyes red with tears, meeting the twelve-year-old Harp Boy in the Clouded Bamboo Forest; he helps her find the Canary by playing a lovely melody next to the babbling brook.

Then there is the image of Keyura and the Ranger, terrified as they drop ever downwards..... only to be rescued by a flaming phoenix which uses its resplendent wings of light to transport them to the Lapis Lazuli Garden.

Keyura kneeling in front of the thirteen-storey pagoda in Dhanyakara,



making a vow in hope of finding the Harp Boy.

Keyura treading the brilliant starlight of the Milky Way, passing through as many worlds as there are grains of sand in the Ganges, ever hopeful, transported by Flame's light spectrum to the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound.

..... One after another, images of the past—real yet unreal—appear in the sky. As Keyura looks on, her eyes blurred with tears, her heart overflows with emotion.

“What is this, Quark?” asks Flame.

However, Quark is so utterly engrossed in these peculiar images from the past that he doesn't hear a word she says.

Suddenly, millions of indigo light particles come shooting out of the sea and project onto the sky-screen images of the future, all in rapid succession, leaving them all dumbfounded!

At the same time a tipsy, red-faced cloud comes swerving into the indigo light, causing the rotating sky-screen and its kaleidoscope of images to come to an abrupt halt.

The teary-eyed Keyura; the smug Quark fingering his C-D ROM drive; the emotionally complex Ranger; the wavering bodhi trees; the endless sandy beach—everything belonging to the present moment appears on the mirror-like sky-screen.

“What is this? How is it that an exact reproduction of our every

movement is being projected onto the sky-screen?”

“Drunken Guest, although it all looks so real, in fact it’s just a mirage; there’s no need to get excited,” says Quark. Seemingly pleased with himself, he opens up his expandable C-D ROM drive and cryptically says:

“In the entire universe, the only real, dependable seed-images are those produced by this C-D ROM drive; all the rest are merely illusions.” Thereupon, as if in competition with the sky-screen, the C-D ROM drive suddenly starts to spew out a series of astonishing seed-images, one after another.

“Keyura, don’t be fooled again by those illusory seed-images!”

All of a sudden, on the sky-screen there appears a tall wave mounted by a handsome, silvery-white boat.

As they look on in amazement, from out of the boat rises a chubby boy with two skyrocket-braids launching from his head.

“That’s Padmaprabha!”

“Splash —— ”

Just as Keyura recognizes his adorable form, the silvery-white boat begins to rapidly move in circles. Then the sea becomes covered with tempestuous waves emitting a strange beam of light.

“What is this?”

As Flame is still speaking, the beam of light rotates 360 degrees.

“Flame, that’s a laser beam,” calls out a tender young voice from behind, whereupon they instinctively turn around.



“Padmaprabha! It’s you!” Keyura calls out excitedly on seeing his brightly smiling face.

“Wasn’t that you on the boat? How did you get here?” asks the Ranger confusedly, looking back at the vivid image on the sky-screen, then taking a closer look at Padmaprabha.

“What you saw just now was nothing more than a laser image.”

“Laser image?” asks Quark, having always been quite certain that there is nothing his C-D ROM drive cannot do.

“Quark, the future lies in the laser beam. It can make an exact reproduction of three-dimensional space; it can also produce impressions of the past, present, and future, and store them indefinitely,” explains Padmaprabha, leaving Quark feeling dejected, but giving Keyura a renewed sense of hope.

“Padmaprabha, can a laser image hold any information about the whereabouts of the Harp Boy? Is it possible to.....”

Before Keyura can finish, Padmaprabha smilingly points to the laser image in the sky and says:

“Keyura, although these laser images look true to life, in fact they are unreal; they’re completely insubstantial!”

“In that case, only my seed-images are able to help Keyura!” gloats Quark with a sense of relief.

“Nothing in the entire universe is permanent and substantial; there is nothing you can hang onto. Even something as amazing as this laser image is really nothing more than a projection of our evanescent

thoughts; it's all emptiness." Padmaprabha stops for a moment, turns towards Keyura, and says:

"Keyura, no matter if it's those seed-images or these laser images, it's all just the magic of the mind. In this boundless universe, only the power of one's vow is real. Through the power of one's vow, it's possible to transcend the limitations of the physical body and freely traverse back and forth through time. The only way you're going to find some news about the Harp Boy is through the power of your vow."

The pounding of the surf on the partially submerged reef begins to twist the alluring laser image, now clear, now distorted, much to Quark's chagrin.

Presently, Padmaprabha makes the hand gesture of the As-illusion Samadhi, whereupon the laser image completely disappears. As Quark stares in open-mouthed wonder, he suddenly realizes that even his seed-images are nothing more than an illusion; for they've never actually been able to bring anybody's purpose to fruition—not even his own!

"Actually, even the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound, is just an illusory laser image!" Hearing Padmaprabha's words, their puzzlement turns to astonishment, as they look around with bulging eyes.

"Do you mean that all these beautiful things are just an illusion?"

"How could this be?"

"What about us? How can we go beyond these illusions?"



20. The Harp Boy

Having first fascinated Keyura and her companions with the marvelous laser images, Padmaprabha then abruptly shakes them out of their delusions, leaving them in the state of empty quiescence where body and mind fall away, where all appearances seem to be like bubbles.

“Oh! Isn’t this Fushan?” says the surprised Ranger, as if waking up from a dream.

In the cool autumn wind, as before, Keyura prostrates in front of the stupa of the former Buddhas.

“All conditioned things are like a dream, an illusion, a bubble, a shadow; they are like a drop of dew or a flash of lightning; this is how to regard them.” Padmaprabha’s words reverberate in their ears. The Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound is as full of Beauty as before. Thinking about what she has experienced during her travels, Keyura has a flash of wisdom.

Gazing up at the stupa, she finally realizes that it is the only thing which can help her fulfill her intense aspiration. As the gentle tintinnabulation of the bells moving in the autumn wind drops into her heart, Keyura reverently brings her hands together in front of her chest and makes a vow.

As the autumn wind affectionately whisks over the motley stupa, it

takes up Keyura's vow, and sends it out to all corners of the universe, into every heart and mind, into the boundless ocean of vows.

In the silence, the brilliant flowers of her heart burst open into a dusty network of thought. In a moment it's as though Keyura sees the joyous fairies of the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound riding the cool autumn wind rapt in glee..... Waving spindrifts come billowing through her mind, a joyous feeling overflows from her heart, entering every pore. Thereupon, the familiar song of the Harp Boy comes wafting up in rhythm with her heart, sending her into a wondrous reverie.....

"Sha ——— sha ——— " the faint sound of footsteps suddenly become as loud as spring thunder, startling Keyura out of her reverie. Opening her eyes, she is surprised and happy to see the stupa in front of her.

Starkly soaring up into the firmament, the stupa has the air of omniscience as it magnanimously tolerates the elements and all the objects which are constantly blown over it. Tears come to Keyura's eyes as she deeply feels the power of the stupa's ancient vow.

The sound of the footsteps becomes clearer.

"Somebody's approaching!" calls out the Ranger, also hearing the footsteps.

Having been perched on Keyura's shoulder all along, the Canary suddenly launches forth at breakneck speed into a copse of red-leaved maples. As a cloud of amazement and apprehension fills her eyes, Keyura senses a strange-yet-familiar ambience which gets stronger as the footsteps become clearer. Instinctively turning around, all she sees



is a youth clad in grass sandals carrying a spade and a medicine pouch, leisurely striding out of the maple trees towards the stupa. She is taken aback.

“Keyura, the Harp Boy — — the Harp Boy — — ” chirps out the cherubic Canary, circling round the youth.

The youth looks like he’s meeting an old friend, as the curious Canary alights on his shoulder and starts pecking at his pouch and shovel.

“Wow! Who is that? I’ve never seen such a stately and handsome youth!” declares Water Jade admiringly.

“Though he’s dressed in simple peasant attire, he has an extraordinary presence about him!”

“Ranger, I never would have imagined that such hidden treasures could be found in Dhanyakara. Despite his youth, he seems to beam with wisdom.”

The Ranger happily replies:

“That’s the Fushan Youth! With all Fushan as his hearth and home, he lives incognito, constantly going about cultivating his widespread plots. Running into him like this is a fine stroke of luck!”

Having thought of something mid-sentence, the Ranger turns to Keyura and says:

“Keyura, surely the appearance of the Fushan Youth is due to the stupa responding to your great piety!”

As he finishes speaking, the Ranger discovers that Keyura’s eyes are filled with translucent tears. Without knowing what is going on, he

watches Keyura with an air of fascination. Her long hair blowing in the wind, she rises to her feet and says to herself:

“It’s the Harp boy! After enduring so much hardship searching for you all over the universe, I’ve finally found you!”

Charged with intense happiness and sadness, Keyura’s words are like a powerful electrical charge which flows through the bodies of the Ranger and all the others. Utterly surprised by this unexpected turn of events, they are flabbergasted as they watch the Harp Boy approach with the elated Canary on his shoulder, wondering what they might do to help Keyura.

Blown by the autumn wind, the bright red leaves slowly drop around the Fushan Youth, as the harp hanging on his back accidentally sounds a few euphonious notes. Filled with joy, the Canary flies behind the Fushan Youth and uses his nimble beak to pluck the strings, playing the same tune that the Harp Boy played that day so long ago in the Clouded Bamboo Forest.

“The music of the Harp Boy! Keyura has found the Harp Boy!” exclaims the Ranger.

As the Canary goes on pecking out the tune, Keyura reminisces about the past.

“Little girl, you’ve grown up!”

As Keyura listens to the enchanting sound, a hundred different emotions come rushing to the fore; yet she can’t say a word.



“Are you the Harp Boy who once helped Keyura find the Canary?” asks Flame, as if speaking for Keyura.

“Sister, I’m not the Harp Boy; I’m called the Fushan Youth.”

“Flame, the Harp Boy and the Fushan Youth are one and the same,” says the Ranger, quite taken aback.

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“Fushan, Keyura has braved innumerable hardships searching for you everywhere all these years!” says Flame with a hint of sadness.

Flashing a knowing smile, the Fushan Youth says:

“Keyura, I’m afraid I’ve put you through so much trouble; let me take you back to the Clouded Bamboo Forest!”

Like a ray of soft moonlight, his gentle voice enters Keyura’s heart, so familiar, yet so new. As she recognizes true happiness emanating from the Harp Boy’s perspicacious eyes, all her anxieties vanish, whereupon she coyly nods in tacit acknowledgement of this rare and beautiful encounter.

Hearing that the Fushan Youth is going to take Keyura to the Clouded Bamboo Forest, the Ranger rushes to say:

“We’ve accompanied Keyura to the far reaches of the galaxy in her search for you, and have heard all about the wonders of the Clouded Bamboo Forest. It’s such a rare opportunity. Might we go along with you to the Clouded Bamboo Forest?”

Ever eager to make Fushan his personal possession, long ago Quark heard that there was a person in Fushan unburdened by narrow

self-interest, who happily braved the elements while roving about, cultivating Fushan and striving to transform it into a kind of Arcadia. All along, Quark has worried that the Fushan Youth might thwart his aspirations to become the master of Fushan. Thus he has been constantly searching for him, but even his all-knowing C-D ROM drive hasn't been able to offer a single clue. But today he has finally come across the Fushan Youth, and excitedly asks:

“Just where is this Clouded Bamboo Forest?”

“It's in Fushan, in between the Sea of Wisdom and the Merit Mountains.”

Nobody has any idea where that may be. Quite eager to have a look at the areas planted by the Fushan Youth, Quark probes further:

“The mountains of Fushan are like a vast maze. Exactly how far is the Clouded Bamboo Forest from the stupa?”

Sensing Quark's impatience, Fushan points to the mountain tops encircled by white clouds and says:

“On the other side of a high pass, there is a spot with dark green bamboos. That's the Clouded Bamboo Forest.”

Thereupon, Quark hurriedly opens his C-D ROM drive and, using these hints, searches for quite a while. Coming up empty handed, he confusedly asks:

“I've been to that place before, but I didn't see any buildings at all!”

“The whole mountain is my palatial home!”

Hearing this, the reticent Water Jade recalls Sudhana's words:



“The Fushan Youth is fully endowed with virtue and wisdom. If you want to see him, then you have to first cultivate these same qualities.....” The recollection sends graceful ripples through Water Jade’s heart.....

“Keyura, bring your loyal friends with you to the Clouded Bamboo Forest!”

Thereupon, the Fushan Youth waves to the Canary, steps onto the red leaves blanketing the ground, and enters the path under the maples to the right of the stupa.....

21. The Sea of Lanterns

It's autumn in Fushan. As the leaves drop and scatter all about, the once-corpulent streams now flow lean with leisurely grace. Nurtured by the heavy dew, a garment of moss drapes the lowlands, crags, and cliffs.

Ever since he made his vow to become the Great Lord of Healing, the Fushan Youth has dedicated his body and mind to Fushan. Bamboo staff in hand and feet clad in straw sandals, having been to every part of Fushan, he regards it as his dear old friend. As a result, Fushan has fully revealed all its secrets to the selfless Fushan Youth.

The Fushan Youth leads Keyura and her companions deep into the heart of Fushan to its most remote and primordial spot.

Both the Ranger, a native of Fushan, and Quark, who is incessantly looking for ways to exploit it, believe they are thoroughly familiar with Fushan. Today, however, seeing how utterly intimate the Fushan Youth is with Fushan, they finally realize that their own understanding is quite meager in comparison.

Following the Fushan Youth along the winding mountain path, Keyura and her companions are overcome with admiration for its wonderful sights, and come to recognize what is most precious in life.

Deeply pleased, Keyura happily follows the Fushan Youth through



the trees and falling leaves. Fushan's caring expression makes Keyura feel at ease. Pondering over all the wonderful results which have come about through Fushan's unstinting efforts, she gains a whole new perspective on Fushan, such that she thinks about staying here and dedicating herself to preserving it. In reflecting on Fushan, she also gains insight into the spiritual world of the Fushan Youth.

The autumn breeze ushers the falling leaves to the ground, and nudges along the rosy clouds woven with sunlight. Enshrouded in the twilight glow, Fushan appears just like a golden pure land adorned with the seven treasures! As night begins to cast its dark cape over Fushan, the last of the afterglow finally disappears from the footsteps of the Fushan Youth. Though they've spent the entire day trudging through the mountains, Keyura and her companions aren't the least bit tired; indeed, they are intent on lingering in the twilight, hoping to discover yet more of Fushan's treasures.

Yet, the rhythms of nature are steady and impartial. Now that the sun has run its course, day gives way to night, and Fushan dons its dark mantle. In the darkness, Keyura and her companions feel unburdened; under the brilliant stars, they feel the pulse of Fushan calling out to them, carried by the wind and gently placed in their hearts.

After some time, the clamorous stars come breaking through the clouds and, embraced by the autumn wind, grow larger and brighter. In a moment, the vault of heaven appears draped in a resplendent network of diamonds and pearls.

Ever since finding the Harp Boy, Keyura has been content and free of anxiety, making her forget her physical tiredness and infusing her with a deep sense of compassion and a desire to share her happiness with all sentient beings. Quietly observing the stars, experiencing the reality and beauty of the present moment in all its details, she is inspired to say:

“Somehow, everything in Fushan seems quite different than before.”

“There is an immeasurable amount of life energy stored away in Fushan. All you have to do is know yourself, and you will unearth these precious treasures,” says the Fushan Youth. After a long pause he continues:

“Fushan’s inexhaustible life force makes everything here appear extraordinary. When ordinary things are tempered by this life energy, they are purified and exhibit their inherent nature. For example, only in Fushan do the stars appear so resplendent!”

“While searching for you, the Ranger and I once entered deep into the hinterland of Fushan; yet at that time the stars were not as beautiful as they are now!” reminisces Keyura with a sigh.

“I’ve been in Fushan all my life, but this is the first time I’ve ever seen stars so big and so bright!” adds the Ranger.

“Actually, every star in the universe has to be tempered by time and the elements before giving off such a brilliant light. Indeed, this same brilliance shines everywhere, but it becomes invisible when the mind is filled with thoughts. Only in such remote and pristine places as



Fushan are the stars visible in their true form. This is because such places bring out our natural state of mind, enabling us to calmly see all things as they really are.....” As the night proceeds, they are led by the words of the Fushan Youth into the ancient and shimmering homeland of the stars. Glowing with enthusiasm, the stars transmit their fragrance on the autumn wind, making Fushan appear to be holding up the heavens.

“Peng — — ” A loud crackling noise shatters the silence and rouses them out of their reverie.

As the noise continues to rend the sky, they look around with alarm, trying to find its source. However, the sound is soon drowned out by the swishing autumn wind. As they are wondering what happened to it, from amongst the densely spaced stars there appears a large, round patch of blue light, with millions of fine red lights flashing in the center, forming into a parabola and filling the sky with a fiery display as it drops.

“Meteor shower!” shouts the Ranger.

“Meteor shower? There’s never been such an unusual meteor shower on Fushan!” says Quark doubtfully.

“Quick, make a vow! Such a large and beautiful meteor shower is surely an auspicious sign; whatever you wish may well come true!” says Water Jade. Then the red beams of light split apart and form into glistening yellow drops, falling down like an autumn shower.

“This isn’t a meteor shower!”

“Look! It’s coming towards us.”

As they exchange opinions, the vast expanse of lights advances towards Fushan. Just as it begins to bear down on them, as if by command, the yellow lights shift back and forth and form into lanterns of different shapes.

It’s such a strange scene that even the Fushan old-timers Quark and the Ranger start to wonder if they might have unknowingly wandered into some strange new place. As they all look on in amazement, millions of fragrant lamps deftly alight on the mantle of the night, effortlessly gyrating on the wings of the autumn wind.....

Before long, the lamps come to rest all over Fushan—on branches, cliffs, and water. In the middle of this gentle sea of lanterns with its graceful waves of light, they feel as though embraced by happiness and good fortune.

Ever fond of lovely scenery, Keyura curiously walks up to the edge of the water where the lamps are floating amongst the water plants. As she approaches to get a closer look at these strange objects, the transparent lamps begin to sway, casting streamers of light onto the surface of the water, illuminating Keyura’s lovely lotus face.

Cautiously stretching out a hand to touch one of the lanterns, Keyura discovers that its transparent cover, though appearing as thin and delicate as a cicada wing, is actually extremely tough and resilient. Realizing that this is meant to protect its bright flame, she withdraws her hand and looks on in appreciation.



With so many bright lanterns spread out high and low, the stars lose their brilliance. The lanterns' warm fragrance dispels the chill from the night air, as the delighted onlookers look on in wonder.

"How marvelous! On each lantern there is a different image," says the Drunken Guest while making a detailed comparison.

"He's right. Look, on this lantern there's an image of a purple-gold lotus!" exclaims Water Jade, pointing to a lantern shaped like a crescent moon.

It seems that all the mysteries of heaven and earth, all the secrets of the universe, appear on the wonderful lamps of all shapes and sizes.

"What is the meaning of this?" asks Keyura in wonderment, taking a closer look at the fascinating images.

"I've heard that there exists somewhere in the universe a sea of perpetual lanterns. It's said that no two are alike, because each lamp contains a unique vow," says Flame while closely examining a few of the innumerable lanterns.

"Is it possible that these lanterns are from that place? I've been in Fushan all my life, but I've never before seen anything like this," says the Ranger, as if deep in thought.

"It's said that the Sea of Lanterns is inside the largest black hole in the universe, for which reason it's almost never seen by human beings. However, two millennia ago there was a great sage who used his supernatural powers to make the Sea of Lanterns briefly appear in the world of humans," says Flame. In response to the curious expression

in the others' eyes, she continues:

“It seems to me that it's only through the power of the vows of a great sage that the Sea of Lanterns can be made to appear in the human realm, corrupt and polluted as it is. Yet, this is such a marvelous array of lanterns; surely it must have come from the Sea of Lanterns!”

In response to Flame's words, Quark swiftly opens up his C-D ROM drive and begins crunching numbers, attempting to determine the exact number of lanterns there are filling the valleys and draping the mountains. He's also hatched a secret plot to take possession of these ancient and rare lanterns.

Quietly smiling, the Fushan Youth admires the array of lanterns, as if meeting an old friend. Seeing Quark dripping in sweat as he frantically spins out his calculations, he walks over to Quark, taps him on the shoulder, and says:

“These lanterns arise and disappear in dependence on the thoughts of innumerable sentient beings. They constantly arise, remain, change, and disappear. Quark, nobody really knows exactly how many sentient beings there are in the universe! Don't waste your effort; you'd be better off simply enjoying this rare and wonderful scene!”

Thereupon, he serenely pulls out his harp, strikes up a tune, and sings:

“Willow branch ever in hand, for innumerable autumns the thirty-two manifestations of Guanyin appear in worlds as numerous as motes of dust; a thousand supplications, a thousand responses; constantly ferrying souls across the sea of distress.....”



The gently flowing melody is carried by the autumn wind into the ears of Keyura and her companions, and throughout the star-filled sky. As if on cue, the lanterns—some on the water, others hanging from branches or cliffs—start floating upwards. In the wink of an eye, Fushan appears to be dressed in a glittering costume, gracefully dancing to the tune. Touched by the joyful and august mood, Quark and the others spontaneously let go of their deluded ideas, and serenely enter into the profound meaning of the lyrics.

“Wow! Each lantern really is charged with the energy of a wholesome vow!” praises Keyura, a pure and kind smile adorning her face.

Seeing the child-like dimple brought out by her smile, and touched by the genuine compassion rippling in her eyes, Flame is moved to say:

“Keyura’s sincerity moved the stupa and touched the Fushan Youth. The appearance of this extraordinary Sea of Lanterns must also be due to her profound piety!”

Deep in thought, Flame peers over the scene, listening deeply to the pensive song. After journeying with her on such a long and arduous journey, she finally understands Keyura.

22. The Clouded Bamboo Forest

In rhythm with the lanterns wavering in the autumn wind, the entire mountain sways out an elegant wave of light, as the intersecting beams of light make Fushan take on the appearance of a gallant lightship gracefully sailing across the boundless dark sea. Like children delighted by a lilting melody, Keyura and her companions playfully ride the ship of vows formed by the remarkable lanterns, each born of a different vow, as it mounts the waves tossed up by the autumn wind. The first light of dawn peeks out from under the sleeping gown of the night, gently rousing Fushan from its slumber in the sea of lanterns. Poking through the layer of dusky clouds, the autumn sun wipes away the dreamy images from the eyes of Keyura and her companions. As they look on, the innumerable lanterns slowly fade and merge into the fresh daylight.

Still thinking about the marvelous lanterns, they proceed on their journey, following the thoroughly unattached Fushan Youth. Following the winding path through the dense forest, the sound of flowing water fills their ears. Off in the distance, layer upon layer of ridges form a proud and vigorous mountain range, leisurely interacting with the vault of heaven.

As they proceed deeper into the mountains, the flavor of autumn becomes more pronounced. Back in their natural element, the



Macaque and the Canary make a ruckus and gambol about. Seeing the pheasants and rabbits foraging in the forest, they excitedly join them, as if meeting old friends and exchanging stories.

Further and further they go, following the Fushan Youth along the mountain paths covered with fallen leaves, traversing one high pass after another. The late autumn colors are at their peak, making the immeasurable Fushan seem even more mysterious and remote.

“Fushan, how much further is it to the Clouded Bamboo Forest?” asks Quark, somewhat impatiently, as he looks around at the misty peaks.

“Barring any obstacles, we’ll be there in about another three days,” answers Fushan.

Throughout the journey, Fushan stops now and then to collect various medicinal herbs. From time to time he also pulls from his pouch various kinds of seeds and carefully plants them in suitable locations.

“These plants don’t seem to be anything special; why, then, do you pack them into your pouch as though they were some kind of treasure?” asks Keyura.

After gingerly placing a plant with a small yellow flower into his bag, Fushan says with a big smile:

“These plants may look ordinary, but in fact they have amazing medicinal qualities!”

“But what are those seeds you’ve been sowing? Even if they do grow to maturity, it’s unlikely you’ll be able to make use of them! So why bother?” interjects Quark.

“I plant things whenever the opportunity presents itself; it’s a way of making this wonderful place even more wonderful!”

Such a generous and kind attitude towards all creation engenders in Keyura and the others a deeper sense of the importance of taking care of Fushan. Thereafter, while assisting the Fushan Youth along the way, they learn all about sowing seeds and the medicinal properties of all sorts of herbs.

Through their common experience and ideals, they draw together in fellowship. In this vast wilderness the young adventurers discover an endless variety of fascinating life forms. Happily sharing the work, they sow seeds all along the way; nourished by the joy of benefitting others, they taste the luscious fruits silently produced by nature for the enjoyment of all.

Today, at first light they ascend yet another precipitous ridge.

“Everybody, watch your step. From here onwards, we have to follow a long crest line—the spine of the mountain. It’s covered with frost and dew, and it’s very slippery, so we have to walk very carefully,” cautions Fushan before stepping onto the crest line in front of the others.

From the steep and slick crest line, towering precipices faintly appear through the mist. As strong gusts of whirling wind shoot up from below to launch intermittent surprise attacks on the fully exposed crest line, there is a constant danger of falling into the precipice. Blown in



by the wind, curious clouds encamp on the crest line, eager to play. Yet, the trekking party pays no attention; utterly focused on their every step, crouching as they go.

After stumbling along with much difficulty for quite a while, they finally come to a round, flat spot, with just enough space for them to sit down and take a well-deserved rest.

“I’ve never seen such strange land forms; have you?” the exhausted Ranger asks Quark.

“Getting to the Clouded Bamboo Forest is more difficult than I imagined it would be!” replies Quark wearily.

Even after traversing one full section of the treacherous crest line, a palpable fear lingers on. Well aware of how they are feeling, after they’re rested up, the Fushan Youth smilingly tells them:

“That hanging valley up ahead covered in mist—that’s the Clouded Bamboo Forest.”

Thereupon, they all jump to their feet and excitedly urge Fushan to lead the way:

“Fushan, we’re ready; let’s go!”

Just then, the morning sun slowly begins to break through the clouds, casting a golden hue onto the rocky ground. They proceed downhill through a meadow full of swaying chrysanthemums flowers—yellow, white, purple, red—dispensing a delicate aroma into the faint autumn wind. The winding path crosses a jade-green meadow and leads to a patch of verdant bamboo shrouded in mist. Suddenly, Keyura becomes

nervous and slows down. Sensing her apprehension, Fushan silently reaches out and takes her small hand.

When they are well past the chrysanthemums and the meadow is covered in a thick mist, Fushan suddenly stops, gestures towards the mist, and says:

“This is where I live—the Clouded Bamboo Forest.”

Now disabused of all their groundless expectations about the Clouded Bamboo Forest, the visitors just stare blankly at the boundless mist. Having waited for this moment for so long, Keyura exclaims:

“It really is the Clouded Bamboo Forest!”

Thereupon, the Canary comes out from his hiding place in Fushan’s medicine pouch and flies up into the layered mist, with the curious Macaque close behind.

“Come with me” says Fushan, taking Keyura’s hand, leading the way through the thick mist.

Passing through the lazy mist, they come to a ravine with a boulder-strewn stream bordered by flowering plants giving off a delightful scent which puts body and mind at ease. Fushan deftly moves a skiff moored on the bank into the water and into the rippling current, as the mist stirs high and low, following the lay of the land. Sitting on the skiff Fushan uses to gather herbs, Keyura and her friends happily admire Fushan’s home, as the Canary, excitedly peers around this place where he once was lost.

After traveling on the rocking skiff for a short while, they see up ahead



a great many jade-green bamboos gently swaying in the wind. Even in the chilly autumn, the Clouded Bamboo Forest proudly displays its deep green color!

With Fushan deftly steering the skiff, they enter into the midst of the verdant, densely spaced bamboos. Gasping and sighing, they look upon a boundless fog gracefully floating like white gauze. As the skiff lightly skims over the water, it seems to rouse the fog out of its tranquility, so that it rises up and gently strokes their skin. The first rays of sun filtering through the leaves mix with the green bamboo and white fog to produce a hue reminiscent of lapis lazuli, light-green and translucent. Every time the bamboo-scented wind blows, the wavering fog dances out a dream-like pattern of light. Admiring the spectacle, they fall into a deep reverie.

After floating along in this manner for some time, the bamboo forest gradually becomes thinner, and they finally come out of their reverie. With Fushan taking the lead, they all jump out of the skiff and follow a barely discernable winding path. On and on they go, until they finally reach a precipice covered with Chinese wisteria. Fushan pushes aside a wisteria cluster and leads them into a narrow passageway with creeping fig, now dense, now thin, covering the moist roof. Astonished, they follow Fushan further inside.

“Wow! There’s a sleeping fox up ahead!” exclaims Keyura, seeing a white fox sound asleep in the middle of the passage.

Aroused from its nap by Keyura's loud cry, the Fox gets up and languidly stretches, eyes only half-open. As soon as the Fox sees Fushan he comes bounding up to him, startling the visitors, prompting Fushan to say:

"Sleeping Fox, lead the way." Turning to the others, he continues:

"He's my companion. Every time I go away, he waits for me here at the end of this passage. Today, however, he has come here to greet us." After giving his tail a friendly wag, the languid Sleeping Fox runs ahead, with the Canary and the Macaque right by his side, as though they were old friends.

The Sleeping Fox leads them into a long and narrow ravine. There they see a large plot planted with medicinal herbs watered by a mist-covered stream vigorously winding its way through the bamboos.

After showing them around the fragrant garden, Fushan leads them to an umbrella-shaped bodhi tree.

"This is my luxurious home," says Fushan, setting down his medicine pouch and smiling at Quark, whose expression reveals his doubt.

Now that she has finally returned to the Clouded Bamboo Forest, Keyura happily reminisces, while the others admiringly look over and discuss Fushan's curious abode.

Fushan pours fresh yam juice into cups made of mulberry wood and serves it to his guests from afar as they happily sit around the tree.

"What is this?" asks Flame, curiously peering at the white liquid.

"Flame, this is yam juice; it's a rare delicacy," answers Fushan



enthusiastically.

Before he can finish explaining, Keyura has already emptied the bowl, all along having full faith in Fushan. As soon as she drinks the sweet juice she feels thoroughly refreshed and invigorated. Noticing her happy countenance, the others all follow suit.

“These yams are only found in the mountains; it’s a gift from heaven. Drinking it improves your constitution. As soon as you drink its juice, you feel completely rejuvenated.....”

Fushan’s soothing voice and the cool taste of the yam juice combine and enter their hearts. Suddenly, they notice hanging on Fushan’s chest a dark-red lion-seal, radiating an incomparably pure light that penetrates deeply into their hearts, slowly opening the clear eye of wisdom. As they look on, Fushan slowly manifests his true form.....

23. The Land of Felicity

After several enjoyable days of visiting the Clouded Bamboo Forest with the Fushan Youth as their enthusiastic host and guide, Keyura and her companions have gained a deep understanding of Fushan.

Today, just as the sun rears its fiery head, the Fushan Youth rouses his visitors from sleep and leads them along a long and rugged mountain path.....

Following Fushan's firm footsteps, they arrive at a surging river flowing through a deep sandstone defile. Looking at the powerful current and the path on the other side, Fushan gravely says:

“Crossing over this raging river won't be easy.”

“What should we do?” asks the Drunken Guest, worried that the river in full spate has brought their tour to an abrupt halt. “Is this the only path to the other side?”

“This is the longest and widest river in Fushan. Although it's difficult to cross, it provides lots of water, making Fushan rich in flora and fauna. If we can cross it, we'll be in a very different sort of place.”

As he speaks, Fushan leisurely strides towards a large thicket of snow-white reed catkins, their wavering reflection dancing in the water.

Heaven and earth silently provide; those endowed with merit and wisdom inevitably drink from the spring of hope.

They follow close behind Fushan as he shuttles about inside the huge



thicket. As the affectionate reeds stroke Keyura's cheeks, her pitch-black hair gracefully flows in the autumn wind. The clever Canary hides inside Fushan's medicine pouch, now and then poking out to have a look around.

After walking for some time, Keyura notices that the sandy soil is becoming softer and wetter. Just as it gets difficult to walk, Fushan stops, turns around, and says to them:

"Come, help me drag this boat into the water."

When Fushan pushes aside the thick and dense reeds, they are surprised to see a simple bamboo raft anchored amidst the reeds. After giving a shout of joy, they push the raft out of the reeds and into a narrow and shallow cove, using poles to propel it towards the river.

Not worried in the least by the surging river, Fushan uses a bamboo pole to skillfully guide the raft around the whirlpools and eddies, steadily carrying them though the waves and headwind towards the verdant mountain on the other side.

A flock of migratory birds heading south skims across the water and circles the raft. Standing comfortably on the steady raft, Keyura and her companions serenely enjoy the lovely sights, until the small sandbar of reeds fades in the distance, whereupon they approach swaying bulrush and kudzu vines attached to the side of a cliff. Thanks to the strength and skill of the Fushan Youth, they safely reach the other shore, which has quite a different character.

No sooner do they tie the raft onto a short stalagmite than Quark

excitedly runs up a slope covered with lemongrass.

The further they walk up the gravel-covered path, the steeper it gets. Running up ahead, Quark arrives at the ridge line, where the blue sky comes into sight over the mountain, seeming so close as to be within arm's reach. Coming to a halt and out of breath, he shouts:

“Wow — down below is a deep blue sea!”

Summoned by Quark's shout, the others rush up to the ridge.

“Wow! What a huge and beautiful sea!” they say in unison.

“Strange. I never knew that Fushan is bordered by the sea,” says Quark in wonderment.

“The Clouded Bamboo Forest is located in Fushan, in between the Sea of Wisdom and the Merit Mountains.” Fushan's words echo inside Keyura's ears.

“This is the Sea of Wisdom. It produces and regulates the excellent water and air in the Clouded Bamboo Forest.”

Hearing Fushan explain, they suddenly realize that this vast sea of pellucid, azure-blue water in front of them is a repository of unlimited virtue and merit!

Every square inch of Fushan seems to be imprinted on the soles of the Fushan Youth's grass sandals. With great agility, he quickly and easily makes his way through the tall tangle of grass and vines. Following close behind, Keyura soon goes just as smoothly by placing her feet in the imprints left by Fushan's grass sandals. While doing so, she clearly sees her future direction in life, in this immense world with so many



competing possibilities.

Coming out of the maze of grass, they proceed downwards, following the lay of the land. Then they make a turn, and the vast sea appears directly in front of them, dominating their field of vision. The sky and the water are the same shade of blue, making it difficult to discern where one stops and the other begins.

Suddenly, a cool sea wind blows in, silently entering all their pores. Gazing out upon the boundless sea, watching the waves vigorously surging forward, they have a kind of epiphany, as all their thoughts are swept away by the sound of the waves.

“Long, long ago, this spot was deep under the sea. Afterwards, the collision of two land masses resulted in the formation of the complex and mysterious landforms of Fushan.....” explains the Fushan Youth as he walks.

Observing this majestic mountain range gracefully stretching out along the sea as far as the eye can see, the Ranger spontaneously asks:

“Why does this mountain range seem so very different from those I’ve seen before in Fushan?”

“Fushan is filled with a great variety of landforms, but this is the most unique. It is formed out of the most remarkable and mighty elements in the universe. It may look very different from the rest of Fushan, but in fact this is Fushan’s original appearance.

The Fushan Youth vividly describes the grace and charm of this verdant mountain chain as though he and Fushan are best friends.

“Look! The plants here are exquisite!” exclaims Water Jade, breaking off a golden-colored flower.

“Year round, this is the first place to receive the wind; that’s why these plants are quite small. Though they may not be large, they are very hardy. See these lilies; even the northeast monsoon can’t subdue their vigor and fortitude!” says the smiling Fushan.

The mountains stretch endlessly to the south, drawing forth the sea, bounded by the graceful charm of the snow-white spindrifts. The Fushan Youth energetically leads the way along an ancient path in between the blue sky and the wild grass, further into this place of extraordinary natural beauty. Usually a verdant green, in the dry autumn the slopes are cloaked in gray. The wind coming down from the mountain and the wind blowing up from the sea meet in the fragrant grass, greeting the youthful sojourners, full of optimism as they stride into reality itself.

“Look! There on the hillside.” In the cool sea breeze, Keyura suddenly spots an especially remarkable group of hills, its verdant slope seemingly inlaid with a light-yellow pearl.

“It looks like some sort of sculpture!” says Quark.

Then the Ranger and the Drunken Guest see that on the slope there is in fact a statue partially visible behind the tree-shaped clouds. Without saying a word, all at once they charge up the slope towards the pale-yellow pearl, skirting the ironwood trees proudly stretching into the



wind, weaving their way through the tussocks protruding from the rugged ground. They soon come across a copse of dark trees with yellow flowers, in the midst of which is a gray stele inscribed with the words “Land of Felicity.” Looking up, they see a towering statue of the bodhisattva Guanyin on the slope.

“Wow! What a stately Guanyin statue!” declares Quark.

Flanked on both sides by leisurely drifting white clouds, the stately image makes such a deep impression on Keyura and the others that they stop in their tracks and look up in silent admiration.

“What’s such a dignified Guanyin statue doing in such a remote place?” each asks in astonishment.

Noticing the puzzled look on their faces, Fushan smilingly tells them:

“Follow me; then we’ll take a rest.”

Moving as though he has a plan in mind, Fushan uses his bamboo staff to separate the clusters of thorny lemongrass, and then swiftly leads them up the slope full of flowering trees. Before long, they see several dozen tall and stout trees huddled together, as if hiding some secret. Graced by the faint sound of a bell and the rustling of the treetops in the breeze, the copse has a peaceful and auspicious ambience.

Thoroughly familiar with the terrain, the Fushan Youth effortlessly passes through the ironwood trees and comes to an ancient gate flanked by two bodhi trees and surmounted by the Wheel of the Dharma. As they rustle in the wind, the mottled, deep-green leaves cast their elegant shadows on the wheel.

After admiring the majestic and mysterious gate, once they pass through the ancient passageway they see yellow sage in bloom, spreading out like a golden carpet, leading up to a sanctuary, as decorous as it is simple. On either side of the sanctuary are plain and elegant pavilions flanked by pines; in one hangs an ancient bell, in the other a huge drum. Seen from the distance, the huge Guanyin image seems to be seated on top of the sanctuary, piercing the blue sky, compassionately looking down on them.

“Fushan, what is this place?” asks Flame, scanning over the pure and auspicious scene.

“This is the only old monastery in Fushan; it’s been here for over a thousand years, and it uses the pure sound of its bell to encourage all the residents of Fushan to live righteously and happily.” As Fushan speaks, he leads the way past the towering trees throwing dark shadows, and up to the sanctuary.

The fall is an especially genial season here. A delicate fragrance wafts about the spacious and elegant sanctuary, where there are enshrined three stately Buddha images, as if waiting for the arrival of those who have a karmic connection.

“It looks like you come here quite often!” says Keyura, noticing the well kept state of the sanctuary.

Following the surrounding corridor, as they circumambulate the sanctuary they notice that its plain walls are hung with scrolls of edifying calligraphy.



“The flourishing yellow flowers are pure wisdom; the thriving green bamboos are thusness itself.” While considering the meaning of this verse, Keyura realizes that this is surely a place spiritual import. Yet, she can’t help but wander into the past and dwell on the future.

Ascending the stairs in a pensive mood, following the winding path bounded by Chinese Banyan trees and Formosan Firethorn bushes, they come to group of tallow trees laden with white seeds ready to burst, as multitudes of squirrels excitedly scamper about and enjoy their annual feast.

After climbing flight upon flight of moss-covered stairs, the awe-inspiring Guanyin statue appears on the sweeping slope.

Unable to conceal their excitement, they rush up the steep stone stairs; by the time they reach the statue’s lotus throne they are all out of breath. Having arrived, they are rewarded with a stunning view—the boundless sea dotted with innumerable waves crashing with stately vigor; the dark-green hills extending endlessly in both directions, seemingly mingling with the waves. This is the panoramic view of Fushan, all its glory laid bare.

“This is an image of the bodhisattva Guanyin, who attained enlightenment by practicing perfect penetration through hearing and listening to the sound of silence. She is the embodiment of compassion; if ever you are in trouble, all you have to do is call on her by name, and she will come to your rescue. In one hand she holds a vase filled with the water of the Dharma; in the other she holds

a willow branch which she uses to sprinkle the entire Chiliocosm with the soothing water of the Dharma.....” explains Fushan while tenderly stroking one of the statues’ large, round feet.

Sitting erect below the lotus throne, as they look out on the ceaselessly churning sea and listen to the sound of the waves, they forget themselves and enter a state of deep serenity. After a while, the stars begin to rise up from the boundless sea. Wary not to disturb their reverie, the night silently covers the earth in its soft nightgown.

“Look! Guanyin is radiating a soft and pure light!” Unnoticed, Fushan has lit up a large number of candles and placed them all around the open-air Guanyin, creating a scene straight out of the Pure Land!

Bathed in candle light, Guanyin’s eyes intently gaze out upon the vast sea, conveying wisdom, compassion, and vigor!

Sensing Guanyin’s vow of compassion, Keyura looks up with a solemn expression and says:

“The vicissitudes of life are as numerous as the waves on the sea. May I emulate the vows of the great Guanyin and rescue all those who are lost and drifting in the treacherous sea of tribulation.”

Deeply focused on her vow, Keyura places her palms together in front of her chest and piously prays. As her long hair blows in the night wind, her pure vow is picked up by the waves and conveyed into the heart of the Fushan Youth, as he observes Keyura kneeling in front of Guanyin.



24. Sumeru in a Mustard Seed

· The Play of Suchness

Having scaled a great many mountains on their way to this ancient monastery on a slope facing the sea, the exhausted travelers bask in the sacred starlight, listening to the sound of the waves mixing with the wind, embracing a dream of visiting another world, a place of purity. Even after all the others have fallen fast asleep, Keyura eagerly admires the scenery, until she too is overcome by the long journey and falls asleep nestled up against one of Guanyin's great feet.

"Keyura —— Keyura —— " As if in a dream, Keyura faintly hears someone calling her name, then discovers the Canary lightly pecking at her earrings. After rubbing her eyes a bit, only half-awake, she vaguely makes out what appears to be Guanyin standing right in front of her in the early morning light. Although Guanyin's expression is full of wisdom and compassion, she is taken aback.

"Keyura, don't be afraid. It's me, the Fushan Youth." Hearing the gentle voice, Keyura fully wakes.

"Keyura, the sunrise here is extraordinary. Come with me to the seashore!"

All is quiet and the whole world sleeps, except for Guanyin, who continually watches over the sea, guiding the ships safely back to

shore. In the faint light of dawn, Fushan briskly leads Keyura through the silent monastery grounds, down the long stairway flanked by snow rose bushes, over the elegant pine bridge, and out the tall gateway.

Going out the gate, Keyura feels the nip of the cool sea breeze blowing through the tangles of tall grass as she closely follows Fushan down a winding and hidden cart track. Roused from their deep slumber by the visitors, the insects begin to emerge from the grass and buzz about. Inspired by their infectious joy, the Canary happily circles around Fushan and Keyura.

Emerging from the grass, they come face to face with the boundless sea, ever welcoming to all who approach. As she takes in a deep breath of the cool, salty air, Keyura feels relaxed and carefree. Seeing her delighted countenance, Fushan takes her by the hand and leads her along the beach of fine sand.

As the sleepy sea wind languidly blows, yesterday's lofty sentiments slip into a pleasant dream. Leaving his straw sandals on the sand, Fushan says to Keyura:

“All the sand on this beach is shell sand; it's quite rare. When you walk on it with bare feet, you come to understand the secret of nature!” Keyura follows Fushan towards the serene and dark sea, her bare feet tickled by the soft, fine sand. Enjoying the moist, warm sensation, she feels like she's stumbled into a world of primordial truth.

When the dream fairies finally return to their own realm, the entire sea is infused with light. Kissed by the first rays of dawn, the plain white



clouds begin to blush; then their rosy cheeks are reflected in the sea, laying down brilliant swathes of colored light on the wavering surface of the water.

“The sun is about to appear!” declares Fushan while pointing towards a bank of clouds progressively reddening.

Inspired by the steadily growing swathes of red, the wind begins to whip up spindrifts in endless succession. Suddenly, the red orb of the sun rises up from the sea, as its golden-yellow rays instantly pierce the clouds. Forthwith, the intersection of the sea and sky becomes a great canvas of marvelous, constantly transforming cloud and light. Before long, the sun takes off its red robe and replaces it with a vast garment of resplendent golden light.

“Wow — The sun! The sun has come out!” exclaims Keyura.

Smiling broadly, Fushan says:

“Keyura, day in and day out, the sun rises up from the sea; it never gives in to indolence. The sunlight in Fushan forever waits for those who understand it! If the sunrise in Fushan is to your liking, then you ought to stay here!”

The sea—a miniature universe endowed with boundless magnanimity. With Fushan’s guidance, Keyura understands the mysteries ensconced in the sea, in heaven and earth. She says with emotion:

“My search for you took me to the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound, where I saw the heavenly Omniscient Ocean. Even though it’s not as beautiful, standing next to this azure sea, I feel even more serene.”

“Keyura, one’s external environment is conditioned by the mind. During your long search for me, you gained a wealth of experience; as a result, everything you now encounter is sure to appear more real,” says Fushan, gazing out on the azure sea.

Under the brilliant sunlight, the vast sea begins to stir. Rising up from empty space, the northeast monsoon pulls down the wind and raises up the waves; surging billows pound the exposed reef rock; snow-like spindrifts leap into the cyan sky, appearing only to disappear; the evanescent white bubbles land on the shell sand and once again tell the story of impermanence. Leisurely ambling along, Keyura collects all sorts of beautiful stones, washed down the ravines, now scattered in the shell sand—quartz, cornelian, rose stone.....

Time flies by, and in the wink of an eye the sunlight has lost some of its majesty; the gracefully setting sun sends off a parting glance in the afterglow. Shoulder-to-shoulder, Keyura and Fushan face the declining sun.

In the resplendent twilight the wind steadily gains strength. Suddenly, a powerful gust comes off the sea, stirring the beach with such force that a grain of sand lands in Keyura’s eye; pierced with pain, shimmering tears roll down her pink cheeks. Fushan swiftly responds by carefully blowing into Keyura’s eye, again and again, until, with much difficulty, the fine white grain is picked up by Keyura’s tears and carried out the corner of her eye.



“Dang ——” Just as the tear rolls out, the crisp sound of jade being stuck rises up from the shell sand. Looking down, they notice that the sound was made when a jade ornament fell out of Keyura’s hair after being bumped by Fushan, who quickly stoops down to retrieve it.

As he does so, he is astonished to discover that the tear with the grain of sand in it, illuminated by the setting sun, looks just like a precious pearl. Even more amazing is that in the transparent tear-pearl can be clearly seen an image of Streams and Mountains without End extending indefinitely. Within the wonderful landscape, amidst the high mountains bordered by rambling streams and bright flowers, is This-world Tathagata, with a face like the full moon and eyes like lotuses, leisurely roaming in the spring, singing songs of joy. Fushan also sees himself and Keyura strolling on the beach, with the Ranger and the others all running towards them.....

Just then, in front of the Guanyin statue, the drum of the Dharma silently rises up and softly beats out a verse:

.....It is as though there were a great scripture, equal in size to three thousand worlds,
 contained in a single atom,
 and it is the same with every atom.
 Then along comes a wise man
 endowed with pure vision, seeing all,
 who breaks open that atom and reveals the scripture

for the edification of all sentient beings.....

Suddenly, a brilliant flower blooms in Fushan’s heart, whereupon he looks upon the wonderful scenery and says:

“The world in a grain of sand; the Tathagata in a single leaf. The entire Truth of the great Chiliocosm is contained in this tiny grain of sand!”

Just then, a celestial cicada with variegated wings, thin and transparent, rises up over Guanyin, carried upwards as if by some supernatural power. The higher it flies, the bigger it becomes; in an instant, its resplendent light permeates throughout Fushan.

“Hua — — la — — ” Suddenly a loud sound rises up. Just as the swerving clouds glow bright red and the sea and sky join as one, there appears a classically elegant treasure boat on the horizon.

“Pra ——— bhu ——— ta ——— rat ——— na”

A deep voice calls out from the boat, whereupon Fushan stands on the sand, looks towards the boat, and excitedly waves his hands.

“Prabhūtaratna, the Three Elders know that you have completed your search for Truth. They’ve asked Padmaprabha and I to bring you back to the Clouded Bamboo Forest.”

“Brother, we’ve been waiting for you for so long; quickly get on board!”

The graceful Purple Robe and the chubby Padmaprabha stand shoulder-to-shoulder on the prow of the boat, facing the wind and the



last glimmer of twilight, happily waving to Fushan.

Seeing his old companions after such a long time apart, Fushan remembers his purpose for visiting this world, and immediately jumps on board the boat.

“Fushan, wait, wait!” cries out Keyura, as Fushan leaps on board without so much as looking back.

“Keyura — — Keyura — — the Three Elders are waiting for me; I have to go back! Take care of yourself; perhaps we’ll meet again,” Fushan reluctantly calls out to Keyura standing on the shore.

Tears pour down Keyura’s cheeks, like pearls freed from their string. Seeing Keyura weeping, Purple Robe strokes the Canary, now nestling on his chest, and says:

“Canary, you can’t come with us to the Clouded Bamboo Forest; quickly go back; you have to stay here with Keyura.”

After circling Purple Robe three times, the Canary reluctantly and haltingly flies back to Keyura.

“Keyura, the Canary is my dear old friend. But now that you have become so close, let him stay with you,” Purple Robe’s gentle voice calls over the horizon.

Carrying away Fushan, the jeweled boat shatters the stormy waves tinged with red, as it sails towards the distant, glowing horizon.

“Fushan — — ” Keyura’s pitiful cry reverberates through the firmament. As a bevy of emotions mixes with the sound of the waves, the Fushan Youth waves goodbye to the lovely Keyura.....

Like an unbreakable transparent string, the sadness of parting tightly binds Keyura's heart.

The last rays of the setting sun elongate Keyura's lone shadow.

Just then, from out of the twilight arises the faint sound of music—harp, zither, flute, drum. Listening, contemplating, Keyura's agitated heart gradually comes to rest, peaceful and happy in body and mind..... After a while, Keyura suddenly discovers that she is back in Zifangyuan, seated on a huge lotus floating in a jeweled pond, surrounded by innumerable soft and spotless leaves, enveloped in a pure-white light.

The sun of wisdom rises, its rays permeating the Clouded Bamboo Forest. In the middle of the black bamboos there is great hall, bright and fragrant, made of the seven precious gems. Inside the hall a youth seated on a golden dais explains a treasured classic — — the Lotus Sutra. He is Prabhūtaratna.



Character Introduction

1. Earth

The Drunken Guest Wallowing in the Mire is a bold and powerful youth who becomes permanently intoxicated after mistakenly eating some fermented fruit. He then takes a thousand-year nap inside a golden-yellow water lily, oblivious to Flame's unshakable affection for him.

He represents the element earth, since in his drunken state he wallows in the mud, just as sentient beings wallow in the mire of their own delusions.

The earth is characterized by solidity and stability; it's also the source of wealth and all life. When we are immersed in the muck of ignorance, what we need most is wisdom.



2. Water

Water Jade wears an elegant white gown and looks like a silvery dragon splashing beneath a towering waterfall. She skips about holding an exquisite narcissus, her graceful movements one with the water.

Water is characterized by change; sometimes it's surging wildly out of control; at other times it's docile and subdued.

Great virtue is like water. There's nothing it doesn't embrace, nothing it doesn't cleanse. The sound of a babbling brook is highly refreshing; a raging torrent is like the roar of a fearsome beast. However, when properly channeled, water is of great benefit. Water is also a source of poetic beauty, as shown by such expressions as "A thousand moons reflected in a thousand rivers."





3. Fire

Flame remains in Dark Valley trying to bring the Drunken Guest out of his stupor with the help of birds carrying candles in their beaks. She uses her beautiful light spectrum to save Keyura and the Ranger from falling to the bottom of the universe, and later uses it to transport their entire party to the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound, where she uses a seed-lamp to make the Closed Water Lily bloom after being covered with muck for ages.

The power of virtue generates the flame of wisdom. Fire represents the wisdom faculty and the search for Truth.



4. Wind

The Mountain Ranger patrols the mountains and provides assistance to all those in need. Ever eager to provide selfless service to others, he assists Keyura in her search for the Harp Boy. In the Realm of the Awe-inspiring Sound, thanks to his great stamina and perseverance, the travelers are able to release the precious air which has been sealed in ice for ages.

Wind represents the power of making a vow. Through the wisdom faculty, we come to see that the entire universe is one community, and that one's own well being and that of others is really the same thing.





5. Space

The Sky Youth carries a zither and searches high and low for a joyful fairy. His zither doesn't need to be plucked; it picks up on his train of thought and then makes lovely music all by itself. After vainly searching everywhere for a joyous fairy, he finally finds his true refuge.

Space represents awakening, the kind that suddenly appears as if all by itself, free of worldly constraints, completely open, revealing Truth and unlimited joy.

Space also represents tolerance and accommodation; all things exist in space. It's also the plenum void out of which all things are born.



6. Perception

Keyura is blessed with such a congenial temperament that flowers spontaneously bloom wherever she goes. After her brief and fortuitous encounter with the Harp Boy, she sets out on an epic search to try to find him, undaunted all the while. Her love for the Harp Boy is like pure dewdrops in the forest.

Perception represents intelligence and understanding; it's the ability to appreciate the beauty of things without needing to possess them. With this attitude, everything one does becomes a kind of joyful play, and the meaning of life reveals itself.





7. Consciousness

Quark has a penchant for technology and making calculations. He goes around with a CD-ROM drive which can do pretty much anything. He's always looking for the best, the most, the greatest, infinity; for this is his way of searching for the secret of the universe—the mysterious fountain of the spirit.

Consciousness is the faculty which discriminates between large and small, more and less, beautiful and ugly; it's this discrimination which gives rise to desire, clinging, aversion, and all sorts of related complications. The kaleidoscope of the universe appears in consciousness; as for the result, it all depends on the individual.



8. Truth (Tathagatagarbha)

Prabhūtaratna represents reality and the Peak Condition (the ideal state of being). At the behest of the Three Elders of the Universe, he leaves the Lapis Lazuli Garden to come to this world in search of Truth. Just before setting out, they remind him that Truth cannot be separated from Beauty. When he arrives in this world he runs into Keyura, who has lost her way. He helps her search for the Canary, but lets Beauty pass unnoticed. Afterwards, he transforms into the Fushan Youth and turns the Fushan mountains into a place of great bounty, but still doesn't find Beauty. It's only when Keyura appears again that he finally realizes for himself that Truth and Beauty always coexist.





◆ New Source Literature 2

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