

Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra

The Universal Gateway of **Kwanseum Bosal**

妙法蓮華經觀世音菩薩普門品第二十五

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This is an English version suitable for recitation. This is not an original “translation”, rather it is based on the translations by Burton Watson, and Tsugunari Kubo and Akira Yuyama, and also on Kumarajiva’s Chinese version. In particular, where other English versions give the name of the bodhisattva as “Avalokitesvara”, this version follows Kumarajiva and uses “Kwanseum Bosal”, or “Kwanseum”, or just “Kwanum” corresponding to Kumarajiva’s 觀世音菩薩, or 觀世音, or 觀音 respectively. The Sino-Korean pronunciations can be replaced with Sino-Japanese “Kanzeon Bosatsu” (etc) or with the Mandarin “Kwanshiyin Pusa” (etc), which are just different pronunciations of the same characters.

[0056c03]

At that time Bodhisattva Akṣayamati arose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, faced the Buddha with his palms pressed together, and spoke these words: “O Bhagavat! For what reason is **Kwanseum Bosal** called **Kwanseum Bosal**?”

The Buddha answered Bodhisattva Akṣayamati, saying: “O son of a virtuous family! If innumerable hundreds of thousands of myriads of koṭis of sentient beings who experience suffering hear of **Kwanseum Bosal** and wholeheartedly chant her name, **Kwanseum Bosal** will immediately perceive their voices and free them from their suffering.

“Even if those who hold to the name of **Kwanseum Bosal** were to enter a great fire, because of this bodhisattva’s awe inspiring transcendent power, the fire would not be able to burn them. If they were adrift on the great waters, by chanting her name they would reach the shallows.

“There are hundreds of thousands of myriads of koṭis of sentient beings who enter the great ocean to seek such treasures as gold, silver, lapis lazuli, mother-of-pearl, agate, coral, amber, and pearl. Even if a cyclone were to blow the ship of one of these toward the land of rākṣasa demons, they would all become free from the danger of those rākṣasa demons if there were even a single person among them who chanted the name of **Kwanseum Bosal**. For this reason she is called **Kwanseum Bosal**.

“If anyone who is about to be beaten chants the name of **Kwanseum Bosal**, the sticks and swords will immediately be broken into pieces and the person will be delivered. If the yakṣas and rākṣasas filling the great manifold cosmos come with the intent to afflict the people but hear them chanting, those demons’ evil eyes will be unable to see them, so how could they possibly hurt them?

“If anyone, whether guilty or innocent, is bound with fetters or chains, such bonds will be broken into pieces; and those who have been bound will become free by chanting the name of **Kwanseum Bosal**.

“When a caravan leader travels on a dangerous road together with many fellow merchants, carrying precious treasures in a great manifold cosmos filled with evil robbers, if there be a single person who says:
O sons of a virtuous family! Do not fear! You should wholeheartedly chant the name of **Kwanseum Bosal**. This bodhisattva bestows fearlessness upon sentient beings. If you chant her name, you will be free from these evil robbers.

“Now, if those merchants chant loudly in unison, saying: **‘Namu Kwanseum Bosal!’** Then, by chanting her name, the caravan will immediately gain deliverance.

[0056c29]

“O Akṣayamati! The awe inspiring transcendent power of Mahasattva **Kwanseum Bosal** is as great and mighty as this. If there are any sentient beings who are greatly subject to sensual desires, if they are constantly mindful of and venerate **Kwanseum Bosal**, they will become free from these desires. If there are any sentient beings who often become angry, if they are constantly mindful of and venerate **Kwanseum Bosal**, they will become free from anger. If there are any sentient beings who are greatly confused, if they are constantly mindful of and venerate **Kwanseum Bosal**, they will become free from their confusion. O Akṣayamati! Thus **Kwanseum Bosal** greatly benefits sentient beings through her awe inspiring transcendent power. For this reason sentient beings should always turn their thoughts to her.

“If any woman wanting to have a baby boy pays homage and makes offerings to **Kwanseum Bosal**, she will bear a baby boy endowed with good merit and wisdom. If she wants to have a baby girl, she will bear a beautiful and handsome baby girl who has planted roots of good merit and will have the love of sentient beings. O Akṣayamati! Such are the awe inspiring transcendent powers of **Kwanseum Bosal** that if any sentient being venerates her, the merit they achieve will never be in vain. For this reason sentient beings should hold to the name of **Kwanseum Bosal**.

“O Akṣayamati! What do you think of those who hold to the names of the bodhisattvas equal in number to the sands of sixty-two koṭis of Ganges Rivers and pay homage to them with drink and food, clothes, bedding, and medicine. Is the merit of such good men and women great or not?”

Akṣayamati answered, saying: “O Bhagavat! It is great.”

[0057a16]

The Buddha said: “If there is anyone who holds to the name of **Kwanseum Bosal** and anyone who pays homage to her and makes offerings even for a moment, the merit of these two people will be equal and the same; it will never be extinguished after hundreds of thousands of myriads of koṭis of kalpas. O Akṣayamati! Those who hold to the name of **Kwanseum Bosal** will attain such benefits of immeasurable and limitless merit.”

The Bodhisattva Akṣayamati addressed the Buddha, saying: “O Bhagavat! How does **Kwanseum Bosal** wander through this saḥā world? How does she teach the Dharma for the sake of sentient beings? What of her power of skillful means?”

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Akṣayamati: “O son of a virtuous family! If there is any land where sentient beings are to be saved by the form of a buddha, **Kwanseum Bosal** teaches the Dharma by changing herself into the form of a buddha.”

“To those who are to be saved by the form of a pratyekabuddha, she teaches the Dharma by changing herself into the form of a pratyekabuddha. To those who are to be saved by the form of a śrāvaka, she teaches the Dharma by changing herself into the form of a śrāvaka. To those who are to be saved by the form of Brahma, she teaches the Dharma by changing herself into the form of Brahma. To those who are to be saved by the form of Śakra, she teaches the Dharma by changing herself into the form of Śakra. To those who are to be saved by the form of Īśvara, she teaches the Dharma by changing herself into the form of Īśvara.”

“To those who are to be saved in the form of Maheśvara, she teaches the Dharma by changing herself into the form of Maheśvara. To those who are to be saved by the form of the great commander of the devas, she teaches the Dharma by changing herself into the form of the great commander of the devas. To those who are to be saved by the form of Vaiśravaṇa, she teaches the Dharma by changing herself into the form of Vaiśravaṇa.”

“To those who are to be saved by the form of a minor king, she teaches the Dharma by changing herself into the form of a minor king. To those who are to be saved by the form of a wealthy man, she teaches the Dharma by changing herself into the form of a wealthy man. To those who are to be saved by the form of a householder, she teaches the Dharma by changing herself into the form of a householder.”

“To those who are to be saved by the form of a state official, she teaches the Dharma by changing herself into the form of a state official. To those who are to be saved by the form of a brahman, she teaches the Dharma by changing herself into the form of a brahman. To those who are to be saved by the form of a monk, nun, layman, or laywoman, she teaches the Dharma by changing herself into the form of a monk, nun, layman, or laywoman. To those who are to be saved by the form of a wife of either a wealthy man, a householder, a state official, or a brahman, she teaches the Dharma by changing herself into the form of such a wife.”

“To those who are to be saved by the form of a boy or a girl, she teaches the Dharma by changing herself into the form of a boy or a girl. To those who are to be saved by the form of a human or of a nonhuman such as a deva, nāga, yakṣa, gandharva, asura, garuḍa, kiṃnara, or mahoraga, she teaches the Dharma by changing herself into any of these forms. To those who are to be saved by the form of Vajrapāṇi, she teaches the Dharma by changing herself into the form of Vajrapāṇi.

[0057b19]

“O Akṣayamati! This Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara displays such qualities, wanders through many lands in various forms, and saves sentient beings. For this reason you should wholeheartedly pay homage to **Kwanseum Bosal**. This **Kwanseum Bosal** bestows fearlessness in times of fearful calamity. For this reason everybody in this saḥā world calls her Abhayaṃdada (Giver of Fearlessness).

The Bodhisattva Akṣayamati addressed the Buddha, saying: “O Bhagavat! I shall now pay homage to **Kwanseum Bosal**.”

He then took from his neck a many-jeweled necklace worth hundreds of thousands of gold coins, gave it to her, and said: “I entreat you to accept this rare-jeweled necklace for the Dharma.”

At that time **Kwanseum Bosal** did not dare to receive it. Akṣayamati addressed **Kwanseum Bosal**, saying: “I entreat you to accept this necklace out of pity for us.”

Then the Buddha said to **Kwanseum Bosal**: “You should accept this necklace out of pity for such humans and nonhumans as this Bodhisattva Akṣayamati, the fourfold assembly, devas, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kiṃnaras, and mahoragas.”

Kwanseum Bosal accepted the necklace out of pity for the fourfold assembly, devas, nāgas, humans, nonhumans, and the rest. She then divided it into two parts and gave one part to the Buddha Śākyamuni and the other part to the stupa of the Buddha Prabhūtaratna.

“O Akṣayamati! With such completely unhindered transcendent powers **Kwanseum Bosal** wanders throughout the saḥā world.”

Thereupon, Bodhisattva Akṣayamati asked a question in verse, saying:

O Bhagavat, endowed with excellent marks!
I now wish to ask you about her once again:
For what reason is the heir of the Buddha Named
Kwanseum?

[0057c07]

The Bhagavat, endowed with excellent marks, answered Akṣayamati in verse:

Listen to the practices of **Kwanum**,
Which have their application to all!
Her vow is deep like the ocean
And her kalpa is of inconceivable length.

After having attended
Many thousands of koṭis of buddhas,
She made a great, pure vow.
I will now explain it to you in brief:
If you hear her name and see her body,
And contemplate her in thought,
Your life will not be in vain;
And you will extinguish all suffering.
If anyone wants to hurt you
And pushes you into a great firepit,
If you contemplate the power of **Kwanum**,
The firepit will change into a pond.
If you drift upon the great ocean and meet danger
From dragons, fish, and demons,
If you contemplate the power of **Kwanum**,
You will not be swallowed by the waves.
If you are on the peak of Sumeru
And are pushed by somebody,
If you contemplate the power of **Kwanum**,
You will stay suspended in the air like the sun.

If any evil one chases you
And pushes you from Mount Diamond,
If you contemplate the power of **Kwanum**,
Not even a single hair will be hurt.

If evil robbers surround you
Each with a sword and the intent to harm,
If you contemplate the power of **Kwanum**,
The thought of mercy will awaken in them.

If you suffer under the punishment of a king
And your life is to be ended by execution,
If you contemplate the power of **Kwanum**,
The sword will be immediately broken into pieces.

If you are imprisoned with a neck chain,
Your hands and feet fettered,
If you contemplate the power of **Kwanum**,
They will disappear and you will be released.

If anyone wants to hurt your body
With a curse or poison,
If you contemplate the power of **Kwanum**,
These ills will return and afflict their authors.

If you meet evil rākṣasas,
Poisonous dragons, or demons,
If you contemplate the power of **Kwanum**,
They will not dare to hurt you.

If you are surrounded by evil animals
Whose teeth and claws are fearfully sharp,
If you contemplate the power of **Kwanum**,
They will run away swiftly
And to an immeasurable distance.

If there are lizards, snakes, vipers, or scorpions,
Whose breath is poisonous like a flaming smoke,
If you contemplate the power of **Kwanum**,
They will turn away swiftly at the sound of your voice.

If thunder resounds, lightning flashes,
Hail falls, and a great rain pours out of the clouds,
If you contemplate the power of **Kwanum**,
They will disappear immediately.

If sentient beings are in great adversity,
And immeasurable pain afflicts them,
The wonderful power of the wisdom of **Kwanum**
Can relieve the suffering of the world.

Endowed with transcendent powers
And having fully mastered wisdom and skillful means,
In all the worlds of the ten directions,
There is no place where she will not manifest herself.
The suffering of those in the troubled states of being:
Hell-dwellers, hungry ghosts, and animals;
And the suffering of birth, old age, illness, and death
Will gradually be extinguished.
She who perceives the world with truth, purity,
And vast knowledge,
And with benevolence and compassion,
Should be ever longed for and looked up to.
She is a spotless pure ray of light,
A sun of wisdom that destroys the darkness,
A flame that withstands the winds of calamity.
She brilliantly illuminates the entire world.
Her will, the essence of which is compassion,
Shakes like thunder;
And the mind of mercy
Is like a beautiful overspreading cloud,
Which pours the Dharma rain of immortality
And extinguishes the flame of desires.

In a dispute before judges,
Or fearful in the midst of battle,
If you contemplate the power of **Kwanum**,
All enemies will flee away.
She has a wondrous voice,
The voice of **Kwanseum**,
A voice like Brahma's, a voice like the rolling tide,
A voice unsurpassed in this world;
For this reason you should always contemplate her.
You should have no doubt, even for a moment.
The pure seer **Kwanseum** will be a refuge
When suffering distress or the misery of death.
She is endowed with every quality,
Sees the sentient beings with her benevolent eyes,
And her ocean of merit is immeasurable;
For this reason you should pay her homage.

[0058b03]

At that time Bodhisattva Dharaṇīdhara arose from his seat, went before the Buddha and said to him: “O Bhagavat! If there are any sentient beings who hear this chapter on **Kwanseum Bosal**, which explains how her actions are free of all hindrances, her manifestation as the Universal Gateway, and her awesome transcendent powers, know that their merit will not be little!”

When the Buddha taught the chapter, “The Universal Gateway,” eighty-four thousand sentient beings in the assembly gave rise to the incomparable highest, complete bodhicitta.