

Dharma Flower Sutra

*with commentary of Tripitaka Master Hua
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Sutra: T. 262, 22a19

The Buddha told the Bhikshus, "long ago, past limitless, boundless, inconceivable, asankheya aeons, there was a Buddha called Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory, Thus Come One, One Worthy of Offerings, One of Proper and Universal Knowledge, One whose Understanding and Conduct are Complete, Well-Gone One Who Understands the World, Unsurpassed Lord, Taming and Regulating Hero, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Buddha, World honored One. His country was named "Good City", and his aeon was named "Great Mark". O Bhikshus, It has been a great, long time since that Buddha passed into extinction.

COMMENTARY:

THE BUDDHA TOLD THE BHIKSHUS, Shakyamuni Buddha said to the Bhikshus... This sentence was added by Ananda when he compiled the Sutras. LONG AGO, PAST LIMITLESS, BOUNDLESS, INCONCEIVABLE, ASAMKHYEYA AEONS, THERE WAS A BUDDHA CALLED GREAT-PENETRATING-WISDOM-VICTORY. He had great spiritual penetrations and his wisdom was victorious over all. So, I have told you that where you go you must be victorious. THUS COME ONE, ONE WORTHY OF OFFERINGS from gods and humans, OF PROPER AND UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE, ONE WHOSE UNDERSTANDING AND CONDUCT ARE COMPLETE, A WELL-GONE ONE, WHO UNDERSTANDS THE WORLD. He has gone to the best places. He is the smartest person in the world. UNSURPASSED LORD. There is no one higher than he is.

*In the heavens and below there is no one like the Buddha.
In the ten direction worlds, he is beyond compare.
Everything in the world--I have seen it all,
And there's nothing that can compare with the Buddha.*

A TAMING AND REGULATING HERO. He can subdue all in the Three Realms. TEACHER OF GODS AND HUMANS, BUDDHA, greatly enlightened one, WORLD HONORED ONE, revered by those in and those beyond the world." Those are the Buddha's ten titles. HIS COUNTRY WAS NAMED "GOOD CITY," because all the citizens were good, not evil, AND HIS AEON WAS NAMED "GREAT MARK." O BHIKSHUS, IT HAS BEEN A GREAT, LONG TIME SINCE THAT BUDDHA PASSED INTO EXTINCTION. How long has it been? He now gives us an analogy:

Sutra: T. 262, 22a23

Suppose someone were to grind all the earth in the three thousand great thousand worlds into ink powder, and then suppose he passed through a thousand lands to the east and then dropped a particle the size of a mote of dust, and then passing through another thousand lands deposited another mote,

and continued to do this until all the ink made of earth was exhausted. What do you think? Could a mathematician or his disciple ever reach the limit of the lands and know their number?

"No, World honored One."

"O Bhikshus, if the lands this person had passed through, whether or not he set down a particle in them, were all ground into dust, and if each dust mote was equal to an aeon, then the time since that Buddha passed into extinction would exceed their number by limitless, boundless, hundreds of thousands of tens of thousands of millions of asankheya aeons."

COMMENTARY:

"SUPPOSE SOMEONE WERE TO GRIND ALL THE EARTH IN THE THREE THOUSAND GREAT THOUSAND WORLDS INTO INK POWDER, finer than flour, AND THEN SUPPOSE HE PASSED THROUGH A THOUSAND LANDS TO THE EAST AND THEN DROPPED A PARTICLE THE SIZE OF A MOTE OF DUST, AND THEN PASSING THROUGH ANOTHER THOUSAND LANDS, DEPOSITED ANOTHER MOTE, AND CONTINUED TO DO THIS UNTIL ALL THE INK MADE OF EARTH WAS EXHAUSTED. WHAT DO YOU THINK? COULD A MATHEMATICIAN OR HIS DISCIPLE EVER REACH THE LIMIT OF THE LANDS AND KNOW THEIR NUMBER?"

"NO, WORLD HONORED ONE," all the Bhikshus answer.

"OH BHIKSHUS, IF THE LANDS THIS PERSON PASSED THROUGH, WHETHER OR NOT HE SET DOWN A PARTICLE IN THEM, WERE ALL GROUND INTO DUST AND IF EACH DUST MOTE WAS EQUAL TO AN AEON, THEN THE TIME SINCE THAT BUDDHA PASSED INTO EXTINCTION WOULD EXCEED THEIR NUMBER BY LIMITLESS, BOUNDLESS, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF TENS OF THOUSANDS OF MILLIONS OF ASAMKHYEYA AEONS."

The text says, "suppose someone were to grind all the earth in the three thousand worlds into ink powder." Now, just by looking at the ink someone grinds, you can tell whether his mind is good or bad. If he rubs the stone at an angle, his mind is not straight, not good. If, when he writes, he makes a big mess, then his mind is "sick." You can tell what a person is like by how they grind their ink. In China, they say, "Grind the ink lightly and hold the brush firmly." That's the doctrine of grinding ink.

In the T'ang Dynasty there was Li T'ai-po, a poet from Szechwan. He was very intelligent, but he made a lot of trouble with his gossip. He knew Kung-fu and swordsmanship by the time he was thirty. Before he was thirty he went up for the Imperial Examination. There was a prominent official, Ho Chih-chiang, who was very fond of him. He told Li T'ai-po, "You are sure to take first place. I'll speak on your behalf." Now, the heads of the examining board at that time were Yang Kuo-chung, the elder brother of Yang Kuei-fei, and Kao Li-shih, an eunuch. Ho Chih-chiang spoke to them saying, "Li T'ai-po really writes extremely well. He should get the top place." When the two of them heard this, they were outraged. "You took money from Li T'ai-po as a bribe. We should get a cut! Then we'll talk about who gets first place: A thousand or two pounds of gold... do you think you can come here and pull it off with just your eloquence? Ridiculous!" They thought that Ho Chih-chiang had received a bribe and with-held their share. They were very upset. When it came time to draw straws for writing

an article, Li T'ai-po got to draw first. He felt sure that the top place was his and he felt great. When Yang Kuo-chung saw what he wrote he said, "With your talent, you're qualified only to grind ink for me! You're terrible." When Kao Li-shih heard this, he said, "Grind ink? He isn't good enough to help me put on my shoes!" Li T'ai-po was so enraged he just stammered, "All right, fine. See you later," and walked away, without first place, needless to say. Feeling as if he had really been wronged, he started drinking. He would drink away his sorrows all day long.

Li Po wrote a hundred poems with one bottle of wine.
He slept in the wine shops of Ch'ang-an.
When the Emperor called, he would not get on the boat;
He said he was a wine immortal.

From this we can see that in this world, we should take care not to make anyone angry at us. If you get someone too angry at you, you may have to undergo the retribution at any time. Having been insulted so deeply by Yang Kuo-chung and Kao Li-shih, Li T'ai-po vowed to get revenge when the chance came. But, what chance would he ever get? He wasn't an official or anybody important. How would he get his revenge? A chance did come. Not long after the test, a letter came for the Emperor from Korea, which was written in Korean. Since there was little cultural exchange between countries at that time, there were very few people in China who could read the new Korean language. There wasn't anybody, in fact! The Koreans did this on purpose, to show off to the great country of China that they couldn't even read that small country's writing. This would give the Koreans a reason to look down upon the Chinese. This was a switch, because most countries played up to China. Anyway, when the Emperor got the letter, he gave it to his official for translation, but no one could read it. They all had their PhD's in this and that, but they couldn't read the letter. The Emperor made it known that anyone who could read the letter would be appointed to a high government position, but still, no one could read it. Li T'ai-po was still staying at Ho Chih-chiang's house. When Ho Chih-chiang came home with his eyebrows knitted together in worry, Li T'ai-po asked his friend, "Why are you so worried?"

Ho Chih-chiang said, "The Koreans have challenged China. They wrote us a letter which no one can read. It's in Korean. If we can't even read it, we'll really lose face."

Li T'ai-po said, "Can I take a look at it?"

"You know Korean?"

"Sure," smiled Li T'ai-po, "no problem."

"I'll tell the Emperor!" said Ho Chih-chiang, and the next day he did.

"The Emperor said, "Well, bring him here! We're looking for just such a person: Why didn't this person take part in the Imperial Examination?"

"He did," said Ho Chih-chiang, "but Yang Kuo-chung and Kao Li-shih refused to give him any recognition."

Li T'ai-po came before the Emperor and agreed to read the letter and write a reply. "I have one condition, however," said Li T'ai-po. "You must ask the Korean envoy to come in person and watch

me read the letter and write the reply. That will prove to him that we, in China, have genius among us."

"Of course," the Emperor agreed.

"And another thing," said Li T'ai-po, "after the shabby treatment I got at the examination, I want a special favor."

"Anything you want!" said the Emperor, anxiously.

"While I am doing this, I want Yang Kuo-chung to grind my ink for me, and Kao Li-shih to put my shoes on me. When the Koreans see this, they won't know what to think. They'll assume I'm a great talent, and they will thereby respect the country."

"Fine! Fine! This is a special circumstance. That's a good idea," said the Emperor, and he sent for the two officials.

"Yang Kuo-chung," he said, "this is our highest scholar here. You should grind some ink for him." Yang Kuo-chung didn't like the idea, but he had no choice. It was a command from the Emperor. He had said that Li T'ai-po was only good enough to grind his ink, and now he was being forced to grind ink for Li T'ai-po!

Kao Li-shih had just been ordered to remove Li T'ai-po's shoes. Seeing this, the envoy thought, "How can Li T'ai-po use such a high official as a servant?" Li T'ai-po asked for some wine, and when he was done drinking, he read the letter and translated it into Chinese for the Emperor. The Korean was amazed. "There's some real talent in China, still," he thought. "We don't dare look down on them"

Li T'ai-po, by this time roaring drunk, then wrote a reply and dismissed the envoy. So that's my story about grinding ink.

Sutra: *T. 22b7*

Using the power of the Thus Come One's knowledge and vision, I behold that time in the distant past as if it were today.

COMMENTARY:

USING THE POWER OF THE THUS COME ONE, the Buddha's KNOWLEDGE AND VISION, I, Shakyamuni Buddha, SEE INTO THAT TIME IN THE DISTANT PAST AS IF IT WERE TODAY. It doesn't seem too long ago.

Sutra: *T. 22b3*

At that time, the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying,

*"I recall that in a past age,
Limitless, boundless aeons ago,
There was a Buddha, doubly honored,*

By the name of Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory.

COMMENTARY:

AT THAT TIME, THE WORLD HONORED ONE, Shakyamuni Buddha, WISHING TO RESTATE THIS MEANING, SPOKE VERSES, SAYING, I RECALL THAT IN A PAST AGE/ I remember that in the past, LIMITLESS, BOUNDLESS AEONS AGO/ How long ago? A very long time. THERE WAS A BUDDHA, DOUBLY HONORED/ He had both blessings and wisdom, thus he was doubly honored. BY THE NAME OF GREAT PENETRATING WISDOM VICTORY/ He had great spiritual penetrations and great wisdom, which were supreme over all.

Sutra: T. 22b7

*Suppose a person ground
All of the earth that there was
In three thousand great thousand lands
Entirely into ink powder;
And then suppose he passed through a thousand lands,
And then let fall one particle of it,
Continuing to drop particles in this way
Until all the ink particles were gone.
Suppose all of the countries he passed through,
Whether he dropped particles in them or not,
Again were completely ground into dust motes.
And each dust mote were an aeon;
These grains of dust would in number
Be exceeded by the number of aeons
Since that Buddha has passed into extinction;
It has been limitless aeons such as this.*

COMMENTARY:

SUPPOSE A PERSON GROUND/ ALL OF EARTH THAT THERE WAS/ IN THREE THOUSAND GREAT THOUSAND LANDS/ ENTIRELY TO INK POWDER/ AND THEN SUPPOSE HE PASSED THROUGH A THOUSAND LANDS/ AND THEN LET FALL ONE PARTICLE OF IT/ CONTINUING TO DROP PARTICLES IN THIS WAY/ UNTIL ALL THE INK PARTICLES WERE GONE/ The person passes through a thousand lands and then drops one particle; then he passes through another thousand lands and drops yet another particle, and so on until all the ink is gone. SUPPOSE ALL OF THE COUNTRIES HE PASSED THROUGH/ WHETHER/ HE DROPPED PARTICLES IN THEM OR NOT/ AGAIN WERE COMPLETELY GROUND INTO DUST MOTES/ AND EACH DUST MOTE WERE AN AEON/ THESE GRAINS OF DUST WOULD IN NUMBER/ BE EXCEEDED BY THE NUMBER OF AEONS/ SINCE THAT BUDDHA HAS PASSED INTO EXTINCTION/ The number of aeons since the Buddha Great Penetrating Wisdom Victory entered extinction exceeds the number of dust motes.

Sutra: T. 22b14

*The Thus Come One, with unobstructed wisdom,
Knows of that Buddha's extinction,*

*And of his sound Hearers and Bodhisattvas,
As if seeing his extinction now.
Bhikshus, you should know
The Buddha's wisdom is pure, subtle, and wondrous;
Without outflows and without obstructions
It penetrates limitless aeons.*

COMMENTARY:

THE THUS COME ONE, WITH UNOBSTRUCTED WISDOM/ KNOWS OF THAT BUDDHA'S EXTINCTION/ of the extinction of the Buddha Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory, AND OF HIS SOUND HEARERS AND BODHISATTVAS/ AS IF SEEING HIS EXTINCTION NOW/ Although it was so long ago, he can see it as if it were happening right now. BHIKSHUS, YOU SHOULD KNOW/ THE BUDDHA'S WISDOM IS PURE, SUBTLE, AND WONDROUS/ WITHOUT OUTFLOWS AND WITHOUT OBSTRUCTIONS/ IT PENETRATES LIMITLESS AEONS/ It penetrates through those limitless, boundless aeons.

Sutra T. 22b19

The Buddha told the Bhikshus, "the Buddha Great-Penetrating-Wisdom-Victory had a lifespan of five hundred forty myriads of millions of nayutas of aeons."

Sutra: T. 22b20

When this Buddha was seated on the Bodhimanda, having destroyed the troops of Mara, although he was on the point of attaining anuttarasamyaksambodhi, still the Buddhadharmas did not appear before him. So it was for one minor aeon and then onwards to ten minor aeons that he sat in the lotus posture, body and mind unmoving, and yet the Buddhadharmas still did not appear before him. Thereupon, the gods of the Triyastrimsha Heaven, spread out for the Buddha under a bodhi tree, a lion throne one yojana in height; on that throne the Buddha was to attain anuttarasamyaksambodhi. Just as he sat down upon that throne, the kings of the Brahma heavens rained down heavenly flowers over a distance of one hundred yojanas. A fragrant wind from time to time swept away the withered flowers as fresh ones rained down. This Continued without interruption for a full ten minor aeons as an offering to the Buddha, the rain of these flowers continuing right up until his extinction. In the same way the gods of the four heavenly kings constantly played heavenly drums as an offering to that Buddha and the other gods made heavenly instrumental music for a full ten minor aeons, right up until his extinction.

COMMENTARY:

WHEN THIS BUDDHA WAS SEATED IN THE BODHIMANDA, HAVING DESTROYED THE TROOPS OF MARA, when he went to cultivate and destroy the hordes of demons... When people cultivate, right before they attain the Way, demons come to test them. Do you know how the Buddha became a Buddha? By passing his tests with demons. A demon manifested a bevy of beautiful women to test the Buddha. Ordinarily in cultivation, one may not have much desire, but right before one accomplishes the Way, the big test comes. The heavenly demons came to destroy the Buddha's Way karma. If the Buddha had even a tiny bit of greed for sex, he would not have become a Buddha.

Since he didn't, he did. Basically, the women that the demon sent were very beautiful, but the Buddha said, "You may be beautiful now, but in thirty, forty, or even fifty years, you will be old, wrinkled, and ugly. You're just stinking skin bags filled with oozing filth: So much for all your beauty! Hah!" When the demon women heard this, they knew that they couldn't disturb his cultivation. They saw their faces change into the faces of old ladies with wrinkled skin and bags under their eyes. It was horrible! How could such ugly creatures disturb the Buddha? So off they ran.

All Buddhas go through pretty much the same testing. So this Buddha, HAVING DESTROYED THE TROOPS OF MARA, ALTHOUGH HE WAS ON THE POINT OF ATTAINING ANUTTARASAMYAKSAMBODHI, enlightenment, STILL THE BUDDHADHARMA DID NOT APPEAR BEFORE HIM, and he wasn't able to certify to the Buddha fruit. SO, IT WAS FOR ONE MINOR AEON. An aeon is 396,000 years. A thousand of these is a minor aeon. One of my disciples was complaining that she had been studying the Buddhadharma now for two years and still hadn't attained anything! In the larger scheme of things, two years is like one



minute. It's not a long time, this Buddha sat for ONE MINOR AEON AND THEN ONWARDS TO TEN MINOR AEONS, THAT HE SAT IN LOTUS POSTURE, BODY AND MIND UNMOVING. He didn't wriggle around. What's even more difficult, his mind did not even give rise to false thinking. AND YET THE BUDDHADHARMAS STILL DID NOT APPEAR BEFORE HIM. after ten minor aeons, he still hadn't become enlightened, and he still hadn't attained the fruit.

THEREUPON, THE GODS OF THE TRIYASTRIMSHA HEAVEN SPREAD OUT FOR THE BUDDHA, UNDER A BODHI TREE, A LION THRONE ONE YOJANA IN HEIGHT; let's say it was a small yojana, that is, forty miles high. ON THAT THRONE THE BUDDHA WAS TO ATTAIN ANUTTARASAMYAKSAMBODHI, the Buddha-fruit. JUST AS HE SAT DOWN UPON THAT THRONE, THE KINGS OF THE BRAHMA HEAVENS RAINED DOWN HEAVENLY FLOWERS OVER A DISTANCE OF ONE HUNDRED YOJANAS, four thousand miles. A FRAGRANT WIND FROM TIME TO TIME, SWEEPED AWAY THE WITHERED FLOWERS AS FRESH ones rained DOWN. As soon as the petals withered, the breeze blew them away, and then new ones rained down. THIS CONTINUED WITHOUT INTERRUPTION FOR A FULL TEN MINOR AEONS AS AN OFFERING TO THE BUDDHA, THE RAIN OF THESE FLOWERS CONTINUING RIGHT UP UNTIL HIS EXTINCTION."

IN THE SAME WAY, THE GODS OF THE FOUR HEAVENLY KINGS CONSTANTLY PLAYED HEAVENLY DRUMS AS AN OFFERING TO THAT BUDDHA, AND THE OTHER GODS MADE HEAVENLY INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC FOR A FULL TEN MINOR AEONS, RIGHT UP UNTIL HIS EXTINCTION.

Bhikshus, the Buddha Great Penetrating Wisdom-Victory passed through ten minor aeons before the Buddhadharmas finally manifested before him and he attained anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

COMMENTARY:

Shakyamuni Buddha told all the great BHIKSHUS, THE BUDDHA GREAT-PENETRATING WISDOM-VICTORY PASSED THROUGH TEN MINOR AEONS BEFORE THE BUDDHADHARMAS FINALLY MANIFESTED BEFORE HIM AND HE ATTAINED ANUTTARASAMYAKSAMBOODHI. The Buddhadharmas here refers to enlightenment to the Way, to the attainment of Bodhi, and certifying to the fruit. to be continued